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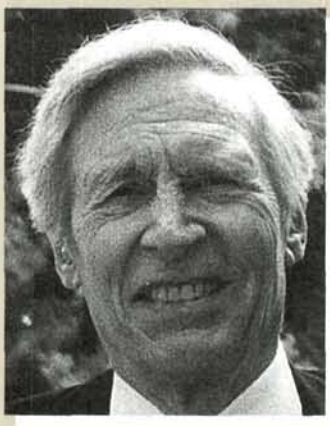

Liberalism & Religion

An Interview with Political Philosopher JOHN RAWLS

Bernard Prusak

Bonnard Rediscovered

Leo O'Donovan

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Dorothy Day: The Play

Celia Wren

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To the Editors

Editing the creed

After reading the editorial and related articles in your issue of August 14, I propose the following addendum to the Nicene Creed:

"We believe that the fullness of truth has been revealed to the pope. Or it will be revealed to a future pope at some later date. Or not. Amen."

NANCY SULLIVAN MURRAY
Syracuse, N.Y.

Knee-jerk reactions

I knew it! Talk about Pavlovian knee-jerk reactions! As sure as day follows night, *Commonweal* gleefully pounced on the pope's recent apostolic letters, *Ad tuendam fidem* and *Apostolos suos*. It's passing strange that the articles by Richard McCormick, James Coriden, and Robert Imbelli, as well as *Commonweal*'s editorial, were all on one side against the pope's position. That's what you call even-handedness.

In a column published July 31, Steve Kloehn, religion editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote: "So while the pope's latest letter, *Apostolos suos*, has been widely interpreted as Rome's attempt to grab back power given to national bishops' conferences by the Second Vatican Council, the letter itself relies heavily on Vatican II documents, citing its teachings thirty times in eight pages." Kloehn adds: "While one popular analysis has a tyrannical pope curbing the freedom of bishops' conferences, the letter itself suggests [a] very different possibility—that it is protecting the rights of individual bishops from the potential tyranny of bishops' conferences." Why couldn't Robert Imbelli or *Commonweal* have written these insightful words instead of the religion editor of a secular newspaper? "The children of this world are more shrewd than...are the children of light."

It was to individual bishops, not to episcopal conferences, that Christ entrusted the sheep of his flock. I'm sure that after reading *Apostolos suos*, more than one American bishop exclaimed: "Free at last; great God, free at last from the the tyranny of the bishops' conference." Commenting on the lettter, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput was right on target when he said, "I do what I believe my vocation as bishop obligates me to do before God and his vicar. Whether I'm in the minority or majority usually doesn't faze me much." In another such comment, Archbishop Anthony Pilla, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, said, "I am happy to see that the Holy Father has indicated the conditions under which episcopal conferences can exercise an appropriate teaching authority. The affirmation that conferences can do so if there is unanimity among the bishops or with the *recognitio* of the Holy See when there is widespread but not unanimous agreement clarifies a situation that has been under discussion for more than a decade."

It seems that *Commonweal* prefers the centralization and bureaucracy of the bishops' conference to the Christ-given rights of the local bishops. But you are on the wrong side of history, and you sense it.

(REV.) GINO DALPIAZ, C.S.
Stone Park, Ill.

The editors reply:

Father Dalpiaz may well be right that "more than one" American bishop welcomed *Apostolos suos*. Exactly how many welcomers were there? Nobody knows or ever will know, but we'd guess it would be at least nine. That's the number of American bishops who voted against adoption of the two most significant teaching documents issued by the NCCB in recent years: *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (1986). There are approximately four hundred U.S. Catholic bishops eligible to cast votes on such occasions, but if the requirement of unanimity laid down in *Apostolos suos* had been in place in 1983 and 1986, those nine negative votes—or just one of them—would have put the two pastoral letters on hold until they could be reviewed, and possibly revised or rejected, by the Vatican curia. To regard the new requirement as constituting a defeat for bureaucracy and a step toward decentralization strikes us as passing strange.

Our correspondent may also believe that in imposing the requirement of unanimity the apostolic letter struck a blow for the autonomy of bishops, making them, as he says, "free at last." But, as our editorial argued, there is little sign of such a trend, either in the anemic worldwide Synod of Bishops or in local sees, where ordinaries are subject to curial supervision, including inquiries, threats, and other forms of intimidation as they seek to exercise "the Christ-given rights of the local bishops." In contrast, the NCCB lacks the tools needed for tyranny. It cannot reprove, much less remove, a diocesan bishop—or for that matter, an assistant pastor. An unlikely ogre.

Modest proposals

Since this is the season for making changes in canon law, I suggest one more: Let it be amended to incorporate the concept of due process, applicable at all levels in the church. The concept is alien to the thought processes and procedural practices of the Vatican curia, but it is totally consistent with the teaching and practice of Jesus Christ.

A second suggestion: Could all of us, bishops and nonbishops alike, who have spoken American English all our lives, be told the names and linguistic backgrounds of those Roman residents who are empowered to tell us how to use our language in the liturgy?

Finally, there is the phenomenon of those in the Vatican who are not the pope but give the appearance of wanting to be. To give due weight to those who do such heavy theological lifting on our behalf, we need a new category. I suggest the term, "just barely fallible."

BILL BRODERICK
Arlington, Va.

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COMMONWEAL

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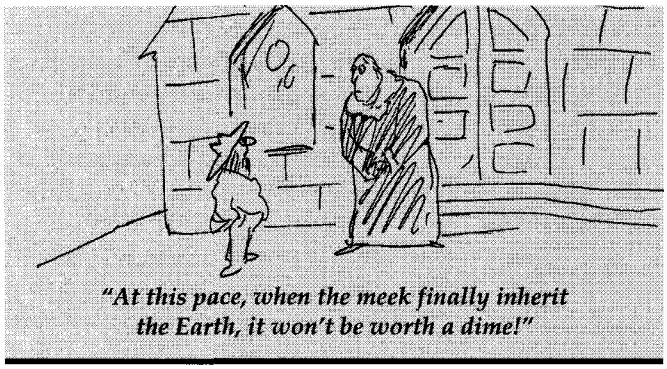

"At this pace, when the meek finally inherit the Earth, it won't be worth a dime!"

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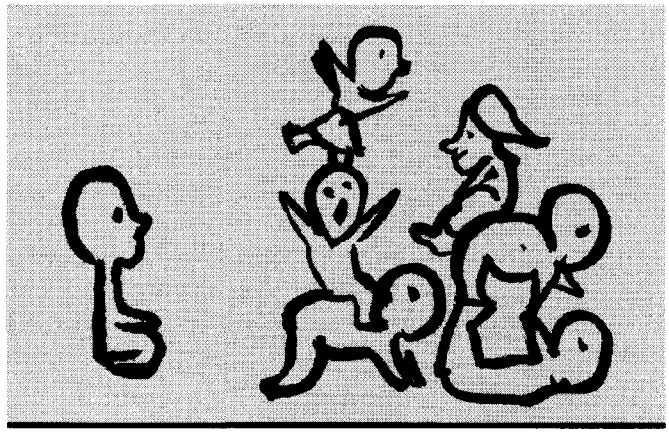

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(Continued from page 2)

Witch hunts ahead?

"The Pope's Hard Sayings" (*Ad tuendam fidem* and *Apostolos Suos*) and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's explanations will be cause for rejoicing by some, weeping by others, from the hierarchy to the laity. As a priest, I've been saddened by the retreat from Vatican II reforms, which now resembles a march back to the Stone Age.

My view may be biased, but I don't see promulgation of these documents as life-giving. I fear loyalty oaths for priests will be followed by new-millennium versions of witch hunts. Any and every expression on matters religious, from liturgy to education, that is not 110 percent orthodox will have to be defended once it has been reported and denounced. A horror story? May it be a gigantic figure of my imagination.

MARK FRANCESCHINI, O.S.M.
Westminster, Colo.

Housing is key factor

Representative Jim Wayne's article on the use of housing trust funds to create more affordable housing [August 14] reflects his insightfulness about housing needs in his own state and across the country. Having worked with him in Kentucky, I have often told him how I wish I could clone him to a few other states.

It may be helpful to note that, although housing trust funds have not yet generated enough funds to replace what the federal government has withdrawn, they have had significant impact all over the country. Still a relatively new response to urgent housing needs, they have committed more than $1.5 billion toward building and preserving some 200,000 units of housing for low-income households. More important, these funds represent an ongoing commitment by local and state governments to continue addressing critical housing needs.

What excites most states is that their housing trust funds not only address critical housing needs but are also good for local economies. Pumping dollars into local construction industries provides jobs, generates increased household incomes, creates a growing property tax base, and yields other secondary economic benefits. On average, state housing trust funds have been able to leverage more than $9 for every $1 that the fund provides for a housing project. These extra dollars come from other public and private sources—and they are dollars we may very well never have seen but for the housing trust funds.

The National Association of Home Builders estimates that housing construction accounts for nearly 10 percent of domestic employment. The state of Washington estimates that it has generated 11,867 jobs through its $159 million investment in housing. Maine estimates that a $4.2 million investment helped create or sustain more than 900 jobs in construction, banking, real estate, and other work related to housing, paying an estimated $19.4 million in wages. Arizona found that its housing trust fund generated about $4 million in recurring property taxes and another $1 million in personal income taxes from construction labor receipts. Similarly impressive numbers are registered by each of the thirty-three states that have created housing trust funds. Like Jim Wayne, they have found that investing in trust funds is investing in their states' citizenry.

MARY BROOKS
Frazier Park, Calif.

The writer is director of the Housing Fund Project of the Center for Community Change.

Reviewer reviewed

If Sinead O'Connor portrayed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s mother saying "the f-word" in a movie, would *Commonweal* print the same glowing review Richard Alleva gave O'Connor [June 5] for portraying the Virgin Mary saying the same word in *The Butcher Boy*? I hope not, but you never know.

(REV.) DONALD BRICE
Washington, D.C.

From the editors: We suggest that our correspondent has misread Richard Alleva's review. It began by listing the distasteful aspects of the film, including the one noted by Father Brice, and it clearly registered the reviewer's own ambivalent response to the movie: "Out of the wrong side of the mouth, through tears, with a sick sensation at the pit of the belly, but laugh we do," Alleva wrote. That doesn't strike us as "glowing."

Seduced by $$$?

I couldn't believe the editorial on school vouchers ["Good Exercise," July 17], but I shouldn't have been surprised. At last there's an issue on which most people in the church can agree, because it involves money.

As an American I believe that asking the public to support private religious schools, whether Christian, Jewish, or Islamic, is wrong, no matter how you rationalize it. To say that because vouchers go to parents, it is not the government but the taxpayers who do the choosing is ridiculous. Should the government cover my choice of what to put in the collection basket every Sunday?

Under the Wisconsin law, parents can determine whether their children will participate in any religious activity in the schools the parents have chosen. So what is the purpose of Catholic schools? To train our young people in academics while listing religion as an option? When I attended Catholic schools (for twelve years), we were there to be instructed in the Catholic faith, to take part in regular religious activities, and to learn how to live in harmony with Catholic ideals. Is that why today's Catholics don't see the need to support the Catholic school system as our parents did?

When you accept money from the government, you are beholden to the government. But even the church, it seems, will compromise for money. The Catholic church now worships the same god as the rest of America, the almighty dollar.

KRIS JARANTOSKI
Chicago, Ill.

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Liberalism & its limits

Just as Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa are slugging their way toward new major league baseball home run records, two heavy-hitting (but, we trust, not testosterone-enhanced) sociologists have gone to bat in defense of liberalism in religion. In doing so, they have raised interesting questions for liberal Catholics whose views depart in some important ways from other forms of liberal Christianity.

In the September 11 issue of *Commonweal* ("The Revolutionary Event of Vatican II"), Andrew Greeley issued a summons for church authorities and Catholic conservatives to come to terms with the irreversible nature of the changes brought about by Vatican II, an event that shattered traditional authority structures and brought into existence a church where individual Catholics "decided that it was not wrong to be Catholic on their own terms." In a more surprising essay in the *Christian Century* ("Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty," August 26-September 2), Peter Berger, a neoconservative and a longtime critic of mainline Protestantism, came to the defense of liberal denominations that have seen their membership, intellectual credibility, and morale decline over the last three decades. "Religious institutions built on modern skepticisms will be fragile," Berger wrote, "but they can show remarkable vitality." Celebrating the Protestant principle of *sola fide*—"by faith alone"—Berger suggested that institutionally "weak" denominations may offer a truer witness to the self-emptying, "kenotic Jesus" than do the "self-assured, triumphalist institutions that merit the appellation of 'strong churches.'"

Berger's schema, which he does not apply explicitly to Catholics, still leaves a liberal Catholic in a decidedly ambiguous position. His description of the doctrinal and existential dilemma faced by churches and believers in an age of competitive individualism and the dissolution of community—where religious affiliation is voluntary, every authority questioned, and religious pluralism drifts easily toward religious indifference—is familiar enough. But Catholics are members of one of the archetypal "strong" churches, one in which institutional authority and sacramental mediation are judged to be necessities, not luxuries, of faith. In that regard, Catholics are likely to question Berger's critique of "triumphalist" institutions as well as his confidence that modern men and women can "live with uncertainty without succumbing to a corrosive relativism" by relying on "weak" institutions and what he calls the Protestant principle "against any absolute claim made for a relative reality."

Of course, at the very least, Catholics must increasingly deal with the reality of the church as a weaker institution. Catholics, too, have gone from a period when the church was thought immutable and monolithic to an embrace of uncertainty and pluralism. Yet most Catholics will still say that relying ultimately on an individual appropriation of faith is not sufficient—practically or theologically. "A revelation is not given," Cardinal Newman wrote, "if there be no authority to decide what it is that is given." Similarly, Newman argued that without a robust principle of authority, doctrinal development was an incoherent idea. It is not necessary to dispute either Berger's or Greeley's description of modern religious prac-

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tice—both are very helpful—to ask what might be the *content* of a Catholic faith lived under such fragmented and privatized institutional arrangements. In the long run, can a church whose sacramental life is set deeply in communal experience and creedal affirmations survive the modern denial of communal religious categories and authority?

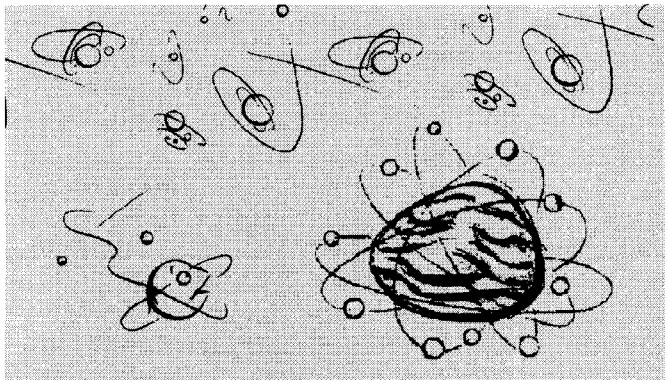
This would appear to be the question raised by Rochester Bishop Matthew Clark's recent removal of Father James Callan from that city's Corpus Christi Parish. As Dennis O'Brien reports in this issue (*see*, "A Parish Dismissal," p. 8), Corpus Christi combined remarkable ministries to the poor and marginalized with a "prophetic" pushing of predictable doctrinal boundaries. On questions of who should receive Communion, homosexual "marriage," and the ordination of women, Corpus Christi's identity as a faith community seems as vague as it was nondiscriminating.

Whatever one's views about Corpus Christi's doctrinal free-lancing, Callan's willingness, in the words Greeley used to describe the post-Vatican II church, to "anticipate such decisions and change on one's own authority," raises fundamental questions about how a religious community defines itself. In this regard, Bishop Clark carefully and properly noted that Callan's removal was prompted by concerns over "the governing authority of the bishop and accountability of the community to the bishop."

In other words, the issue is not whether church teaching and practice can and sometimes should change. But how the church justifies change is crucial. Will the model for change be "one's own authority"? Or the principles of *sola fide* and merely voluntary associations? Or will evolution in doctrine or practice entail, as Bishop Clark has said, the "accountability of the community to the bishop"? And will that bishop, in turn, be accountable both to his fellow bishops and to a two-thousand-year tradition?

It is not easy to imagine how traditional Catholic notions of authority can accommodate the realities of modern religious practice described by Greeley and Berger. It is equally true that all too often the exercise of authority within the church does more to undermine papal and episcopal prerogatives than to cope effectively with errors in teaching and practice. Still, it remains a sound Catholic instinct that magisterial authority is a trustworthy referee in the contest between reason and faith, the individual and the community. "Catholic Christianity is no simple exhibition of religious absolutism," Newman reminds us. "Truth is attained not in spite of but through the conflict of opposites" and "it is necessary for the very life of religion...that the warfare should be incessantly carried on."

If Catholics are to "change on [their] own authority" or follow Protestants in what Berger describes as "individual, sometimes idiosyncratic, do-it-yourself efforts," it seems unlikely that the distinctive content of the Catholic faith will survive. Finally, the warning conveyed by these two sociologists is that religious authority has rarely confronted greater challenges. Catholics convinced that authority cannot be dispensed with will find ways to affirm decisions like that of Bishop Clark. Living with uncertainty is our common fate, but that does not mean the church can live without judgment.



"Believe me, sir—in times like these it's quite a privilege to meet a relatively stable element."

VALE, ATQUE AVE

Those who read the fine print will have noticed a significant change on the *Commonweal* masthead. As of last month, Edward S. Skillin is listed as "Publisher Emeritus." We fully expect that—true to form—this new title will have a long run: At ninety-four, Edward is still going strong, having completed sixty-five years with the magazine that included twenty-nine as editor and thirty-one as publisher. Methuselah would be impressed, Cal Ripken, Jr., envious.

At the conclusion of Rodger Van Allen's two-volume history of *Commonweal* (*Being Catholic*, Loyola University Press), Van Allen writes that Edward Skillin has been "the *sine qua non* of *Commonweal*." This is true not only in terms of longevity, but stretches to his editorial contributions (over three thousand articles, editorials, and reviews) and financial commitment (as chief owner of the magazine, he donated his stock to the newly formed nonprofit Commonweal Foundation in 1984). It also applies to the tone and *esprit* Edward engendered in the magazine's pages and office environment. Many years back he wrote of the editorial controversies that are the bread and butter of a journal of opinion: "I believe that the way a journal conducts itself in controversy indicates to what extent it is permeated by a truly Christian spirit." And over the years, he applied that standard not only to editorial content and tone but to how the office ran, day in and day out. We have all benefited from his insights, experience, personal integrity, and unfailing kindness. Now, we will continue to rely on them: In retirement, he has agreed to remain on the *Commonweal* board.

We are grateful to all of those who have helped assure this legacy through gifts to the Edward S. Skillin Endowment Fund. Others may find this a propitious moment to go and do likewise. Now, Edward, our deep thanks. Fully enjoy your richly merited retirement.

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SIDNEY CALLAHAN

CONFRONTING THE GENERALS

War no more!

As U.S. cruise missiles have been deployed again, I am reminded of a conference I attended in California. There I met three young U.S. Army generals who were also invited speakers. They were intelligent, articulate, attractive, and had come to pitch the virtues of the new army. After the debacle of Vietnam, they told us, the army decided to effect reforms that would create an ethical democratic institution, one in which neither race nor gender would trump individual merit.

One of the most enthusiastic of the generals who lauded the military and its virtues was Barry McCaffery. Today, General McCaffery is celebrated as the leader of the U.S. crusade against drugs. As the most decorated soldier in the Vietnam War, he sustained serious wounds and is a stellar example of the warrior hero.

I, on the other hand, obviously no warrior, had been invited to give a talk on conscience and moral decision making. Thus I was fascinated by the generals' moral apology for war and a strong military establishment. We were shown a film depicting the army's mobilization and engagement in the Gulf War. Against a background of stirring music, waving flags, and blue skies, there were shots of attractive young soldiers, both men and women, doing their duty with *esprit* and skill. I could not help noticing, however, that there wasn't a mention of bloodshed, wounds, casualties, or corpses. And there was certainly no depiction of U.S. troops suffocating entrenched Iraqi soldiers by bulldozing tons of sand over their bunkers.

Next up on the program was a pugnacious tarheel general. He gave a witty speech extolling his leadership of the army's operation in Panama. He claimed this campaign had been efficient and ethical, despite accusations from liberals like Ramsey Clark. Our general then went on to sing the praises of the army as a moral and religiously upright outfit; the army, he claimed, was living out the most godly ideals of the Christian tradition. Any questions?

At this point conscience pushed me to my feet. Politely I began by saying that I too was a Southerner, indeed a military child whose people had fought in every war since the Revolution. My father was a Navy captain and my beloved Uncle Tom was a West Point graduate who had become a major general. My disagreements with the speech were not due to personal prejudice.

But, I asked, how can the U.S. Army be exemplifying the best traditions of Christianity when "Thou shalt not kill" is a central commandment? Aren't we enjoined by Christ to love our neighbors, even our enemies, as ourselves? If each and every human being bears the image of God, how can we glory in wars which destroy people?

The general didn't bat an eye. He assured me that while I might hold these opinions the American people did not. For them the enemies of our country were not seen as morally equal to Americans. End of discussion. Nietzsche would have been proud of this thrust against the "despicable" Christian doctrine of the "equality of souls before God."

Although I had been put down in public, I persisted in private to push the conscience thing with the troops. I didn't get very far. One general told me that he felt that the conscientious objectors he'd seen who had "suddenly and suspiciously" discovered scruples when war was declared, were really cowards. And Barry McCaffery, who I surmised was a fellow Catholic, said that the just-war doctrine resolved moral problems for him. In his speech he had exulted with a fierceness worthy of Homer that he had been lucky enough to lead the decisive offensive against Saddam.

Well yes, who wouldn't despise Saddam? I once read an eyewitness account of Saddam casually putting out his cigarette in the eye of one of his prisoners. Surely this monster justly deserves punishment for all of his crimes against his opponents and his own people. Equally depraved perpetrators of atrocities in Bosnia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, and a score of other places also deserve trial and imprisonment. I support international tribunals for war crimes, and grant the need for coercive but nonlethal police actions to restrain predators and psychopaths.

But does this mean I can morally justify missile attacks or full-scale war? Can there be "good violence" or "remedial, righteous violence" that can overcome or prevent "bad violence"? Watching a TV series on the history of war or going to see *Saving Private Ryan*, makes me think that societies have countenanced war because they have never confronted what actually happens during a conflict. With enough distance and self-deception it may have been possible to suppress empathy for the sufferers.

Nor have we calculated war's effect upon those persons who survive the violence. Only recently have we admitted the prevalence of post-traumatic stress syndromes. And in all the books on war and the face of battle that I have ever read, women and their sufferings are nonexistent. Yet it is argued that men fight to defend their women as well as for their country. Supporters of just-war theory point to the necessity of war to stop a Hitler or the horrors of the Holocaust, or to overthrow torturers, thugs, terrorists, and tyrants like Idi Amin or Pol Pot. Can we let such evil men and their regimes run roughshod over the innocent and not take up arms? More to the point, can we have UN peacekeeping forces without a readiness to engage in battle? Serbian war criminals like Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic are not going to give themselves up voluntarily.

All right. I understand the arguments

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of my fellow Christians who defend just wars. But in the end, none of these arguments convinces me. How could they when, as a Christian, I believe in a God who chooses to suffer violence on the Cross rather than to sponsor it? Over and over Christ commands us to love each other as he has loved us, to take up our cross and forgive rather than do harm to our neighbor. I am convinced by the thinkers who affirm that Christians must not go to war and must eschew all violence. We must overcome evil by good and struggle for justice only by nonviolent means.

I am also increasingly convinced that choosing violent measures too often produces "chain reactions of uncontrollable violence." So-called good violence is losing its moral authority and can hardly remain firmly differentiated from bad violence. Only "truthforce" (to use Gandhi's word) and good will toward opponents can end destructive cycles of hate.

Despite what the generals would have us believe, only those willing to suffer and struggle nonviolently can save civilization. The meek *will* inherit the earth—if proud warriors don't destroy it first. □

Dennis O'Brien

A PARISH DISMISSAL

Tough decisions in Rochester

It may be symbolic that Bernard McQuaid, the crusty nineteenth-century bishop of Rochester, New York, departed the First Vatican Council before the vote on papal infallibility (July 18, 1870). The present-day diocese of Rochester seems to be playing out yet another "departure from Rome." On August 15, 1998, the pastor of Corpus Christi Parish in Rochester, Father James Callan, announced at the Saturday evening Mass that, at the insistence of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he had been "fired" from the position he had held for twenty-two years. Contrary to Callan's claim, Matthew Clark, the bishop of Rochester, has stated unequivocally that Callan's "reassignment" was his (Bishop Clark's) decision alone.

In an op-ed piece in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* (August 18), Callan cited the reasons for his dismissal: his ministry to women, Protestants, and gays. At Corpus Christi, the parish associate, Mary Ramerman, assists at the Eucharist in vestments and all Christians are welcomed to the Communion table. Early on, Corpus Christi became known as the church from which to bury victims of AIDS. Beyond these facts, it has been suggested, without clear corroboration, that Callan officiated at gay marriages. Evidently Jews, non-Christians, and nonbelievers were invited to Communion. Mary Ramerman's vestments included a stole, the official mark of ecclesiastical offices not open to women.

Reaction in Rochester has been almost universally pro-Callan, who is viewed as the victim of narrow-minded authoritarianism. That the story is more complex may be illustrated from the fact that Michael Mascaluso, leader of the conservative Catholic Citizens for a Decent Community, has also sided with Callan. Mascaluso believes that Callan is a mere scapegoat; the real sinner is Bishop Clark, whose removal from the diocese has been a focus of Mascaluso's repeated petitions to Rome. To Mascaluso, it is the bishop who has been too forthcoming in his ministry to women, gays, and Protestants.

Shortly after coming to Rochester, Clark issued an extended and sensitive pastoral letter, "Fire in the Thornbush," on the problems experienced by women in the church. He has been quoted in the past as saying that he would gladly ordain women if that were permitted. In November 1997, Bishop Clark held a special service for gays, lesbians, and their parents at the cathedral. The service was packed to overflowing, the bishop was applauded for his sermon—but he was greeted as he left the cathedral by Masculuso and his group protesting the apparent condoning of serious sin. As for ecumenical outreach, Bishop Clark has established a covenant relation with the Episcopal church, and a formal agreement with the Jewish community to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism as well as to share resources on mutual social concerns.

Having lived in Rochester for ten years, I know both Bishop Clark and Father Callan. Both are individuals of real stature and moral sensitivity. The issue at hand is one of fundamental ecclesiology. Where is the church? Start with the parish. Twenty-two years ago Jim Callan had refused to accept the "luxury" of living in a parish house. After first suspending him from priestly duties, then Bishop Joseph Hogan finally assigned him as assistant to the dying urban parish of Corpus Christi where the pastor was in failing health. In his book, *Can't Hold Back the Spring: The Blossoming of Corpus Christi Church* (Mercury Print Productions, 1997), Callan recounts the resurrection of Corpus. Establishing a whole range of vigorous ministries to the poor, prisoners, refugees, the homeless, the parish went on to welcome all manner of the "marginalized": alienated youth, the physically or mentally handicapped, then, of course, women and gays who had many reasons to think of themselves as "marginalized" by official decree and dogma. The end result is an enthusiastic parish which has grown from 200 to 4,000 devoted parishioners, a parish which has rallied to Callan's side in the current crisis, demanding his reinstatement. (About half the "parishioners" are non-Catholics.)

During our time in Rochester, Corpus Christi was certainly our favorite place of worship. Whenever we had non-Catholic friends visiting—or when we wanted to prove to our own children that church need not be deadly dull —we went to Corpus. Mass at Corpus Christi was a happening: a rousing gospel choir with a splendid black leader at the piano, a kiss of peace that was a universal hug-in lasting

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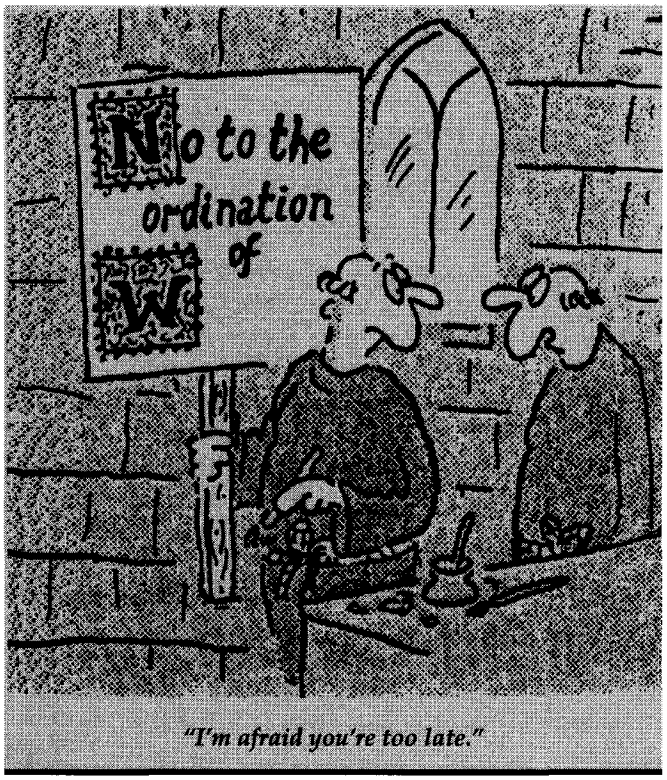
for ten minutes or more. Jim Callan may be the best Mass presider I have ever experienced. He had a way of speaking the liturgy which communicated to the congregation as a parent at a Thanksgiving feast might recall some special, happy memory. Jim presided and he consecrated; that Mary Ramerman in vestments also raised her hand to accompany the lifting of the chalice seemed a sign of openness. I didn't exactly notice the stole.

So what was Callan doing that could result in "firing"/"reassignment"? The question requires understanding church *doing*. Take the Eucharist: The priest pronounces the words of consecration which proclaim the bread and wine as Christ. The words of consecration are what the philosophers call a "performative" utterance. A performative utterance doesn't describe, it does something. If I say "I promise," I have done it—I have promised. It is not the words alone that do the deed—that would be magic. For performatives to perform, there has to be some established community that gives standing, authority to the utterance. Don Quixote, wishing to be knighted, seeks the ministration of the local tavern keeper. "I dub thee 'Knight of the Woeful Countenance'!" says the accommodating barkeep—but, alas, no knighting is actually accomplished. In the Callan situation, if in fact there were "gay marriages" performed, these would be as empty as the Don's claim to knighthood. The law recognizes no such thing as gay marriages, so whatever the words uttered and worthy sentiments expressed, there just is no marriage. Society and institutions may change, but as of this moment, a "gay marriage" can only be a political statement, not a reality.

Similar considerations would apply to Mary Ramerman's stole. Does wearing the stole convey any real authority? Is it an empty gesture like the sadly comic knighting of Quixote? (Or is it a symbolic recognition beyond all authority, like our recognition that the Don is truly noble in his very madness?) Eucharist to all? Is not everyone invited to Christ's table? Karl Rahner acknowledged the "anonymous Christian." Yes, but if individuals consciously reject any authority in the utterance which consecrates, it is not clear whether it is gracious or demeaning to invite them to partake of the central Christian sacrament.

There is no simple explanation of how performative gestures take hold. In Corpus Christi Parish there does exist a community which grants an "authority" to Ramerman's stole. But is Corpus Christi the church? The parish in its protest has received support from "We Are the Church" in Europe. But which "We" is the church? Corpus Christi? The bishop of Rochester? The national bishops' conference? The pope in council? The pope, the solo royal "we"? It may be that Callan's gestures are genuinely prophetic and will eventually gain standing in the wider church. I certainly look forward to the day when women wear the stole in full grace and communion. But for the time being one may have to draw a line between convinced parish practice, mere symbol, political theater, and potential travesty. Much as I admire Callan and the community of Corpus Christi, I believe



"I'm afraid you're too late."

that there has not always been sufficient sensitivity to the ambiguity from sacrament to travesty. It is because of ambiguity that local enthusiasms need to enter the larger dialogue of a universal, historically developed church. The bishop is the designated mediator of that dialogue.

The basic issue in Rochester may well be the authority of local bishops. Bishop Clark, a remarkably warm and pastoral figure, both for his diocese and his priests, has supported Callan for many years while urging him to shape his ministry in ways that would not divorce it from the larger life of the church. There have been communications from Cardinal Ratzinger's office about Corpus Christi, but it seems clear that no directive was issued against Callan. However, the current trend in Rome toward a centralizing judicial orthodoxy tends to undercut local episcopal authority—and creates as backlash the sort of isolating opposition being expressed by some at Corpus Christi. The local bishop may be placed in an impossible middle between an exaggerated papalism and whatever local "prophetism" may arise. Papalists and prophets, being stubbornly certain of the mind of the church, always find it difficult to dialogue and compromise. To be sure, the Roman Catholic idea of church is Roman, but it would be well to emphasize that it is to the bishop of Rome that one grants peculiar authority—and well before Leo I's "*ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia*," Ignatius of Antioch proclaimed "*ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*." True in Rochester as in Rome. □

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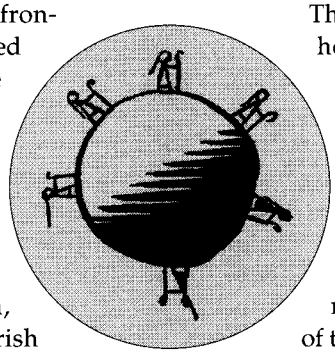
John Horgan

NO MELTING POT

Immigration comes to Ireland

The Irish experience of emigration has long been the subject of countless ballads, as well as providing one of the most important ingredients in the North American ethnic cocktail. Emigration, however, is no longer Ireland's problem. Today the country is having to face up to the changing social and political attitudes created by a new and unprecedented phenomenon: a wave of immigration, especially from Eastern Europe and Africa, which has in some instances put a question mark against Ireland's reputation as the country of a hundred-thousand welcomes, and has led to the creation of a new political grouping, the Immigration Control Platform.

The initial impetus for this trend came with the fall of communism, when political and economic upheaval in Eastern Europe and the permeability of the frontiers between these countries and the West led to large numbers of refugees. Many of these were absorbed as cheap labor in the other countries of the European Union, but it was inevitable that some of them should eventually reach the small island on the edge of the continent and ask for asylum. Political instability in Africa has been another factor: In some African countries, such as Nigeria, where there has traditionally been a strong Irish missionary presence, political refugees were encouraged to see Ireland as a safe haven.



In international terms, the Irish problem with immigration is still a small one: The Netherlands, for instance, took in almost ten times more asylum seekers last year than Ireland did. The difficulty is that the increase in the past few years has been substantial in percentage terms; in a country where you almost never saw a black, brown, or yellow face, there are now visible pockets of immigrants in a number of narrowly defined areas: the inner city of Dublin, where rents are still cheap; Wexford, home to a major ferryport where illegal immigrants enter by the dozen from France, hidden in freight trucks; and Shannon, where asylum seekers have traditionally tried to slip off planes.

The Irish Department of Justice, which has primary responsibility for managing asylum seekers, does not give figures for their countries of origin. Unofficial estimates suggest that Nigerians account for around 30 percent, with Romanians making up about a fifth. The total number of applications is now running at about 4,000 a year; six years ago, it was less than 40.

The problem is exacerbated by two factors. One is the slowness with which the Department of Justice deals with asylum applications: some applicants have been waiting six years for a decision. The other is the fact that, until a decision is made, asylum seekers are not allowed to work, even in the low-pay areas in which, at the moment, there is a conspicuous labor shortage in Ireland. The result is that they have to be fed and housed out of public funds, and this in turn leads to semipublic mutterings of resentment, and worse: There have been isolated, but worrying, outbreaks of raw racism, particularly in Dublin, where Africans in particular have on occasion been set upon and beaten.

In Cork, a schoolteacher, Aine Ni Chonaill, has established the Immigration Control Platform. A year earlier, she had stood on an anti-immigration platform in her Cork constituency, garnering a paltry 293 votes; but recent publicity for her organization, including a major appearance on the chart-topping Gay Byrne TV show, ensures that her influence will continue to grow. She argues strongly that her policy is not ethnically based. "I don't care what nationality, class, or life-style they come from. They are all nonnationals and there is no room for more. A scattering of exotica is fun; it brightens up our lives. But the days when it was limited to that are long past."

There are probably more people who agree with her in private than are prepared to say so in public, and there is a real danger that administrative confusion and delay, compounded by a lack of political leadership, may allow such sentiments to fester. From former President Mary Robinson to current President Mary MacAleese, and increasingly spokespeople for the churches, voices have been raised to defend the human and social rights of these immigrants, and to remind us of the welcome that was offered our own emigrants in many other countries for a hundred and fifty years or more. In the absence of real political leadership, however, this may not be enough.

The Irish experience of immigration has, up to now, been extremely limited, not least because the economy, pre-Celtic tiger, simply had little work to offer, even to its own people. Government policy in the late 1930s and 1940s, as new research is now making clear, effectively barred many European Jews from seeking asylum in Ireland. In 1956, an influx of refugees from Hungary was briefly accommodated; the experience was not a success, and many of them eventually went to the United States. In 1969, there was an influx of Catholics from Northern Ireland, following the destruction of many nationalist areas in Belfast. More recently, small colonies of Vietnamese boat people have been established. The most recent immigrants, however, regardless of how small their numbers may be, will test Ireland's reputation, and its public attitudes, as none of their predecessors have done. □

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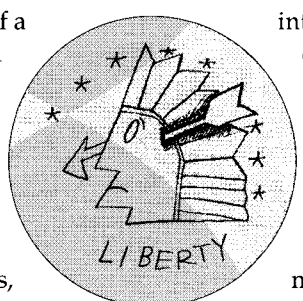
Julia Vitullo-Martin

STARR CHAMBERS

The problem with grand juries

Since Whitewater special prosecutor Kenneth Starr's use of the federal grand jury has the nation's attention at the moment, now is a good time to reflect on this ancient but little-understood political institution. With their deep distrust of prosecutorial abuse, the framers of the Constitution had intended the grand jury to stand between the accused and the prosecutor. Like the crown's attorney, the American prosecutor would not be able to prosecute anyone for a felony before a grand jury had heard and judged charges based on "information known personally to its members," in historian Leonard Levy's words.

The framers enshrined this protection against improper indictment within the Fifth Amendment: "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury...," guaranteeing that the right could not easily be abrogated.



The framers did not anticipate, however, just how powerful a force prosecutorial administration of the grand jury would prove to be. Modeling the American grand jury on the English one, they failed to give it any resources independent of the prosecutor. Over the centuries, the English recognized their grand jury wasn't working and, with the flexibility handed them by their unwritten constitution, abolished it in 1933. The U.S. federal grand jury, however, cannot readily be abolished, which most Americans would probably be reluctant to do anyway. After all, the idea behind the grand jury is important and appealing—the voice and reflection of the community within criminal proceedings. Is this missing voice not at the heart of so many criticisms of the criminal justice system?

Yet the problems in the administration of the grand jury are serious. Because the grand jurors were to be good citizens using their common sense and intelligence as they sat in judgment of their fellows, many rules of criminal procedure were never applied.

Thus, then and now, the grand jury operates in secrecy beyond the view of not only the public and the press, but also of suspects and their counsel. Suspects are barred from bringing their attorneys with them into the hearings, and are not allowed to hear the testimony of witnesses against them. Nor may a suspect testify in his or her own defense. Except for the jurors, the prosecutor, the court reporter, and the witness being questioned, no one is permitted into grand-jury hearings—usually not even a judge.

The rules of evidence that govern all American trials do not govern the grand jury. The prosecutor—who alone decides what evidence to present—can use information from illegal wiretaps, hidden cameras, secretly taped friends and colleagues, as well as hearsay and rumors. Nor is the prosecutor required to present the grand jury with evidence that favors the defendant, even if the evidence is exculpatory.

Even our famous protection against self-incrimination, guaranteed in the Fifth Amendment, does not necessarily govern. A prosecutor can ask a judge to grant immunity to a witness in order to compel testimony. Reluctant as she may have been, Monica Lewinsky was compelled to appear.

The combination of the grand jury's awesome power and its lack of procedural protections for the accused makes it unique within American institutions. Though it operates in the name of the people, it functions with virtually no popular oversight. Its administration is entirely in the hands of the prosecutor, who can even choose—as Mr. Starr has—to direct multiple grand juries to examine the same or similar issues, bringing new meaning to the term "jury shopping." When the grand jury investigating the Lewinsky matter was on a scheduled break at what Starr deemed to be a crucial moment, he simply called in another grand jury.

The *New York Times* has reported that Starr does not intend to permit the grand jury either "to vote or otherwise pass judgment on the issues covered by President Bill Clinton's testimony." He will not, says the *Times*, have the grand jury consider whether to indict the president. In any event, Starr has now sent his own report to Congress, and it is Congress that will have to decide whether the facts warrant impeachment.

Could there be any clearer signals that this investigation is not truly in the hands of the selected body of jurors, bringing their own personal knowledge to bear? The prosecutor may theoretically be the arm of the grand jury, but in practice, he is its master.

President Clinton's lawyers were able to use the prestige of the presidency—along with threats of litigious delays—to encourage Starr to grant the president special privileges. The president was excused from the requirement of appearing in person, with all its attendant personal humiliations. He was allowed to bring and consult with his lawyer. And he refused to answer certain questions.

But the important matter here is not whether President Clinton should have been subject to these onerous procedures, but whether any citizen should be. The federal grand jury is no longer functioning as the framers intended—as a panel of citizens reviewing charges understood by them as members of the community, standing as a protection between the prosecutor and the accused. This is an institution that should be reformed in the name of the people—and returned to them. □

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POLITICS, RELIGION & THE PUBLIC GOOD

An interview with philosopher John Rawls

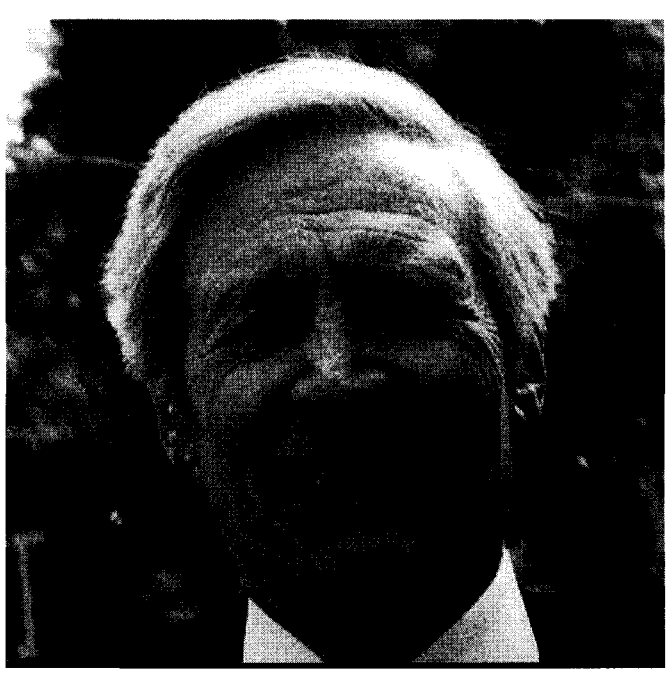
Bernard G. Prusak

John Rawls is widely recognized as the most important American political philosopher since the mid-century. His book *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971) redefined its discipline and, in so doing, aroused controversy on every side. Partly in response to criticism that his liberal conception of the individual all but ignored ideas of the self rooted in religious attachments, Rawls's following work and book, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 1993; revised, 1996), have turned to the problem of pluralism in liberal constitutional democracies. In societies like the United States (Rawls's focus), disagreement about justice goes beyond everyday opinions to basic questions—among others: abortion, physician-assisted suicide, affirmative action, welfare—where conflict can become intractable and threaten social stability. Rawls means to head this threat off by rethinking the deep and basic good of liberal political institutions.

No one has ever accused Rawls of being easy to follow, and readers not versed in the ins and outs of political philosophy may find parts of the following interview opaque. Thus, something of an extended introduction is warranted. To begin with, *Political Liberalism* is not a handbook for the committed democratic citizen, but a work of philosophy that strives to clarify what it means to be this citizen. Like the Catholic philosopher and theologian John Courtney Murray in the 1950s and '60s, Rawls is trying to work out a "public philosophy" in whose terms we can understand ourselves as citizens and responsibly argue with one another about disputed questions of justice. As a philosopher (rather than an advocate of this or that position), Rawls's point is not to make our problems go away, but to draw out what makes liberal constitutional democracies tick and to remind us of why and how this way of living together ought to be considered a good.

Not surprisingly, Rawls's examination of democratic pluralism has proven as controversial as *A Theory of Justice*. Critics on Rawls's right and left charge that he concentrates so much on how we should make decisions (respectfully toward one another's freedom and dignity) that he neglects or fails to address adequately what decisions we should finally make. In short, they ask, "What's freedom for?" In 1963, at a conference on law and philosophy, a prescient John Courtney Murray identified something like this as "the problem of Mr. Rawls's problem." Rawls, Murray argued, "remove[d] from human law all manner of transcendental reference...in the name of a morality of perfect personal autonomy." In this vision of the world, religion's only place can be private; it is excluded from political decision making. Critics as different as the theologian and neoconservative Richard John Neuhaus and the liberal communitarian political theorist Michael Sandel argue that Rawls's version of liberalism in effect excludes from politics what gives many people's lives purpose and shape.

Rawls argues that, since politics has to do with the public good, political arguments should be made in terms of what he calls "public reason": that is, in terms open to all reasonable citizens. Rawls's critics counter, however, that his idea of public reason is not self-evidently neutral, and they go on to ask whose interests this kind of language really serves. In this interview, Rawls attempts to clarify the meaning of "public reason" by discussing the "Philosophers'



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Brief" (*see, New York Review of Books*, March 27, 1997) a statement he signed favoring the legalization of physician-assisted suicide. Much of the "Brief" is cast in the familiar language of rights talk. "We know that not everyone agrees with assisted suicide," Rawls told me, "but people might agree that one has the right to it, even if they're not themselves going to exercise it." Upon reading this line of reasoning, however, readers might well ask, "But what rights are *right* and why?" Rights-driven "procedural politics," its critics charge, never steps back to ask what a right to, say, physician-assisted suicide would mean in practice: what repercussions it would have for the poor, the elderly, the abandoned; how it would color the relationships of children and parents, doctors and patients; whether it would make people think twice about paying taxes to fund a health-care practice they oppose. According to these critics, the language of rights serves to abstract individuals and ignores the goods proper to communities.

In Rawls's defense, it must be recognized that this criticism applies, not to his own philosophical thinking, but to the "Philosophers' Brief"—which Rawls thinks was mistitled. In fact, in arguing against the "Philosophers' Brief," legal scholar Cass Sunstein has drawn on Rawls's philosophical thinking. Sunstein argues that, in the case of *Roe* v. *Wade*, "the [Supreme] Court did too much too soon, in a way that has had enduring harmful effects on American life...." According to Sunstein, the Court needs to be careful not to cut public argument about assisted suicide short. Sunstein and Rawls agree that, since public reason has to do with the public good, it is not limited to talk of rights, but extends to questions of what is right, reasonable, or good.

Ideally, according to Rawls's thinking, all citizens should have a say in political decision making, in whatever language they have to make themselves understood. This is because, for Rawls, what's reasonable always has to be worked out: its limits cannot be set in advance (though, in the United States, they're circumscribed by the Bill of Rights), but depend upon how far citizens will reason with one another. The idea of public reason, Rawls writes in *Political Liberalism*, is "an ideal conception of citizenship for a constitutional democratic regime" and as such "presents how things might be.... It describes what is possible and can be, yet may never be, though [it is] no less fundamental for that." It is an idea of what he now calls a "realistic utopia."

Part of what makes Rawls an important philosopher is that he listens to his critics. At the age of seventy-seven, Rawls finished revising a second edition of *Political Liberalism*. The problem with his earlier thinking, he has concluded, is that he excluded too much. What he's trying to do now is to show what even his critics share: a moral commitment to a common form of life.

Professor Rawls, who taught philosophy at Harvard University from 1962 to 1995, spoke with me about his recent work at his home in Lexington, Massachusetts.

■ BERNARD G. PRUSAK: In *A Theory of Justice*, religion is not listed in the index. But in your recent work, *Political Liberalism* and "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" [*see*, the *University of Chicago Law Review*, Summer 1997], religion has become, if not the central theme, at least a major focus. You've had a turn in your interests. What's the motivation for this new focus?

■ JOHN RAWLS: Well, that's a good question. I think the basic explanation is that I'm concerned about the survival, historically, of constitutional democracy. I live in a country where 90 or 95 percent of the people profess to be religious, and maybe they are religious, though my experience of religion suggests that very few people are actually religious in more than a conventional sense. Still, religious faith is an important aspect of American culture and a fact of American political life. So the question is: In a constitutional democracy, how can religious and secular doctrines of all kinds get on together and cooperate in running a reasonably just and effective government? What assumptions would you have to make about religious and secular doctrines, and the political sphere, for these to work together?

■ PRUSAK: Your problem in your recent work, then, is different from your problem in *A Theory of Justice*.

■ RAWLS: Yes, I think it is. *A Theory of Justice* was a comprehensive doctrine of liberalism designed to set out a certain classical theory of justice—the theory of the social contract—so as to make it immune to various traditional objections like the conflict between individual freedom and the good of the whole. The difference is that, in *Political Liberalism*, the problem is how do you see religion and comprehensive secular doctrines as compatible with and supportive of the basic institutions of a constitutional regime.

■ PRUSAK: Keep to this new problem, to this question of how to make a liberal constitutional democracy not only receptive, but attractive to religious believers, people who wouldn't call themselves first and foremost liberals, people who live according to a comprehensive doctrine. The distinction between a comprehensive doctrine and a political conception, in your language, has been difficult for many people to understand. Could you clarify it?

■ RAWLS: A comprehensive doctrine, either religious or secular, aspires to cover all of life. I mean, if it's a religious doctrine, it talks about our relation to God and the universe; it has an ordering of all the virtues, not only political virtues but moral virtues as well, including the virtues of private life, and the rest. Now we may feel philosophically that it doesn't really cover everything, but it aims to cover everything, and a secular doctrine does also. But a political conception, as I use that term, has a narrower range: it just applies to the basic structure of a society, its institutions, constitutional essentials, matters of basic justice and property, and so on. It covers the right to vote, the political virtues, and the good of political life, but it doesn't intend to cover anything else. I try to show how a political conception can be seen as self-standing, as being able to fit, as a part, into many different comprehensive doctrines.

Now the good of political life is a great political good. It is not a secular good specified by a comprehensive doctrine

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like those of Kant or Mill. You could characterize this political good as the good of free and equal citizens recognizing the duty of civility to one another: the duty to give citizens *public reasons* for one's political actions.

■ PRUSAK: To make the distinction clearer and perhaps more concrete, could you discuss a particular example, like physician-assisted suicide? You cosigned the "Philosophers' Brief," submitted to the Supreme Court last year. In the brief, you argue that people have different ways of understanding suffering and that, in a constitutional democracy, no philosophical or religious authority should be able to say how a person should live his or her last days. How, on the question of physician-assisted suicide, does your argument play out?

■ RAWLS: We wanted the Court to decide the cases in terms of what we thought was a basic constitutional right. That's not a matter of religious right, one way or the other; it's a constitutional principle. It's said to be part of American liberties that you should be able to decide these fundamental questions as a free citizen. Of course, we know that not everyone agrees with assisted suicide, but people might agree that one has the right to it, even if they're not themselves going to exercise it.

Now I think a good argument against this view would be one like Cass Sunstein's [*see*, "From Theory to Practice," *Arizona State Law Journal*, Summer 1997]. What he says is that it would be very unwise for the Court to establish a right like this which is so controversial. The Court's decision would depend on a philosophical argument of constitutional law and allow a right that a lot of people would object to. This would be my candidate for a good political argument against the "Philosophers' Brief." The way to argue against the brief is that the Supreme Court should not, at this stage, take sides either way. It should say—as I think the Court can be interpreted as saying—that, no, we're not going to decide this question, it's being discussed, it may be tried in the states, different states can take different views, and we ought not to preempt the constitutional question when we don't have to. Partly, I think, the Court had in mind the issue of *Roe* v. *Wade*. Now that's a complicated matter on which I don't have an opinion as to whether things would have gone better or worse if the Court had not made that decision. Some people say they would have gone better, some people say they would have gone worse. Sunstein is somebody who thinks things would have gone better, because the decision established a right in a really controversial matter when it need not have done that. The Court should have let the debate play out a bit more.

■ PRUSAK: Your overall argument, then, has to do really with the kinds of arguments that should be made within a constitutional democracy. So "public reason"—your technical term for these kinds of arguments—is not monolithic, as if it gave all the answers once and for all.

■ RAWLS: Exactly: the idea of public reason has to do with how questions should be decided, but it doesn't tell you what are the good reasons or correct decisions. You see, the argument in the "Philosophers' Brief," as I understand it, was a political argument. The argument by Sunstein is also a political argument. But his is based on the nature of courts: they're not good at philosophical arguments, they ought not try to get engaged in them, they ought to go by lower-level, less-broad decisions if possible. Otherwise, the Court opens itself to very great controversy.

■ PRUSAK: Now another argument against physician-assisted suicide would be like Michael Walzer's: that the vulnerable population—the elderly, the poor, the abandoned—would be too large, at least at this time, for this right to be granted [*see*, "Feed the Face," the *New Republic*, June 9,1997]. This right is fine and well for people with the means to use the law as an instrument of freedom, but for other people it would actually be quite dangerous. Now that would be yet another example of an argument within public reason.

Part of what makes Rawls an important philosopher is that he listens to his critics....What he's trying to do now is to show what even his critics share: a moral commitment to a common form of life.

■ RAWLS: Absolutely. I'm not sure that it's a good argument, but that's another question. Public reason arguments can be good or bad just like other arguments. There are many arguments within public reason, and that's the thing to emphasize. I didn't emphasize it enough, you see. I'm now revising *Political Liberalism* so that it fits "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," where this is perfectly clear.

I want to say something here about what in that article I call the "proviso," because I think it's important. It's this: any comprehensive doctrine, religious or secular, can be introduced into any political argument at any time, but I argue that people who do this should also present what they believe are public reasons for their argument. So their opinion is no longer just that of one particular party, but an opinion that all members of a society *might* reasonably agree to, not necessarily that they *would* agree to. What's important is that people give the kinds of reasons that can be understood and appraised apart from their particular comprehensive doctrines: for example, that they argue against physician-assisted suicide not just by speculating about God's wrath or the afterlife, but by talking about what they see as assisted suicide's potential injustices. So the idea of public reason isn't about the right answers to all these questions, but about the kinds of reasons that they ought to be answered by.

■ PRUSAK: A critique of your work is that, really, even

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though you're open to religiously grounded arguments that could be translated, let's say, into public terms, terms all people could understand, nonetheless you're making a veiled argument for secularism. Now this is something you deny.

■ RAWLS: Yes, I emphatically deny it. Suppose I said that it is not a veiled argument for secularism any more than it is a veiled argument for religion. Consider: there are two kinds of comprehensive doctrines, religious and secular. Those of religious faith will say I give a veiled argument for secularism, and the latter will say I give a veiled argument for religion. I deny both. Each side presumes the basic ideas of constitutional democracy, so my suggestion is that we can make our political arguments in terms of public reason. Then we stand on common ground. That's how we can understand each other and cooperate.

■ PRUSAK: Let me restate this: the question would be who determines the terms of public reason. A religious believer might say, well, revelation isn't only private—it's here in this book. How come I can't make an argument from this background? Or more to the point, how come I have to argue in terms everybody agrees with, or might agree with? Given who I have to argue with, it seems that those terms slide into secularism. Take the argument for the sacredness of life. The believer might say that this has been revealed. But by having to make arguments in terms everybody recognizes, I'm being asked to renounce the truth as I know it....

■ RAWLS: No, you're not being asked to renounce it! Of course not. The question is, we have a particular problem. How many religions are there in the United States? How are they going to get on together? One way, which has been the usual way historically, is to fight it out, as in France in the sixteenth century. That's a possibility. But how do you avoid that?

See, what I should do is to turn around and say, What's the better suggestion, what's your solution to it? And I can't see any other solution. This solution has been followed in the United States since the First Amendment. As you know, until then, we had establishment in New England with the Congregational church, and we had it in the South with the Anglican church. How did Madison get separation through Virginia and later Congress? The Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the smaller sects hated Jefferson; to them he was a secularist of the worst kind. But Madison could get Jefferson's bill passed because the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and smaller sects who were excluded in New England and in the South got together for their own protection.

People can make arguments from the Bible if they want to. But I want them to see that they should also give arguments that all reasonable citizens might agree to. Again, what's the alternative? How are you going to get along in a constitutional regime with all these other comprehensive doctrines? And just put it in those terms.

■ PRUSAK: Can religion flourish, can religion survive in this kind of society?

■ RAWLS: I would say the answer is clear: the answer's yes. If you compare the United States with Europe, my view is that what happened in Europe is that the church became deeply distrusted by people, because it sided with the monarchs. It instituted the Inquisition and became part of the repressive state apparatus. That never happened here. We don't have that history. Our history confirms, if anything does, that the answer's yes. I give an historical answer, I don't give a theoretical answer; but I think you can ask whether Catholicism, for example, flourishes better here than in Brazil, or in France. Tocqueville says the same thing. He traveled around this country and talked to a lot of Catholic priests, who were then very much in a minority. When he asked them why they thought religion was so free and flourishing in this country, they told him because of the separation between church and state.

■ PRUSAK: You say, well, what's your alternative, what do you want? In a way, it almost sounds as if what you're saying is, look, this is the best way of getting along, this is the best *modus vivendi*. But you want to argue for more than that as well: you want "stability for the right reasons." What would those reasons be besides peace—which I think would be a very good reason?

■ RAWLS: Peace surely is a good reason, yes. But there are other reasons too. I already mentioned the good of political life: the good of free and equal citizens recognizing the duty of civility to one another and supporting the institutions of a constitutional regime. I assume that, in line with Vatican II, Roman Catholics affirm these political institutions. So do

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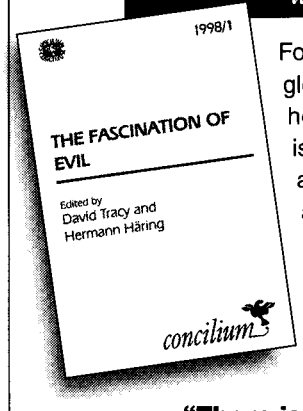

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The Woodlouse

Few of us have heard
his crinkling integument,

his fuss and jog
at the grease and riddled-wood

that shim, as always, the axle of the world.
Yet things drop back into its dusty rims

through his neighborhood, routed
by his umber moods. The rain

goes up and down in his alleys
in blue, forgotten strings. His

is the comedy of litter, as always. He
is the bursar of things.

His shadow, a near yet winnowed guest
sewn to him with legs, shares with him

the same demure signs of want and saga.
On September's humid bricks

I saw his legs upended;
the silence of a tiny orchestra

was waving bows and batons at the sun
—his shadow like a coward under him, freed,

yet clinging to his back. Maybe this
is what Augustine meant: "Cleave fast,

my soul, unto Him, for He has freed thee."
A ponderous thimble, far now

from the spiders' bobbins,
Crusoe of patience: his penance

is not to have one, his work
to have no faith. As for what

is in his breast: no psychomachy,
no dark night, only a thin and labored breath—

but *spiritus* nonetheless.

Gabriel Gudding

many Protestants, Jews, and Muslims.

■ PRUSAK: It sounds as if you're really arguing for the dignity of the individual. I'll turn it back: it almost sounds like, in another way, a religious argument.

■ RAWLS: All right. Why should I deny that? If you want to say that comes down from the sacredness of the individual in the Bible, fine, I don't have to deny that.

■ PRUSAK: But at the same time you don't want to argue for this on any traditional basis. Instead, your argument for respecting the dignity of the individual follows from the functioning of liberal constitutional democracy.

■ RAWLS: Liberal constitutional democracy is supposed to ensure that each citizen is free and equal and protected by basic rights and liberties. You see, I don't use other arguments since for my purposes I don't really need them and it would cause division from the start. Citizens can have their own grounding in their comprehensive doctrines, whatever they happen to be. I make a point in *Political Liberalism* of really not discussing anything, as far as I can help it, that will put me at odds with any theologian, or any philosopher.

■ PRUSAK: How do you think, in your work, the idea of the common good is revised? Is there still a common good? How would we speak of it in a liberal constitutional democracy where pluralism is a fact? Is it thrown out, or is it reconceived?

■ RAWLS: Different political views, even if they're all liberal, in the sense of supporting liberal constitutional democracy, undoubtedly have some notion of the common good in the form of the means provided to assure that people can make use of their liberties, and the like. There are various ways you might define the common good, but that would be one way you could do it.

■ PRUSAK: So the common good would be the good that is common to each citizen, each citizen's good, rather than an overarching good.

■ RAWLS: The point I would stress is this: You hear that liberalism lacks an idea of the common good, but I think that's a mistake. For example, you might say that, if citizens are acting for the right reasons in a constitutional regime, then regardless of their comprehensive doctrines they want every other citizen to have justice. So you might say they're all working together to do one thing, namely to make sure every citizen has justice. Now that's not the only interest they all have, but it's the single thing they're all trying to do. In my language, they've striving toward one single end, the end of justice for all citizens.

■ PRUSAK: What you're trying to do is bring together the practice of constitutional democracy and present it in a way that's compelling.

■ RAWLS: Yes—I hope it's compelling. I try to show that this form of regime, under certain circumstances, is possible and has its own public form of discourse. This doesn't answer any particular question, but only says how political questions should be discussed. I am really explaining what I think should be the public philosophy in a reasonably just constitutional regime.

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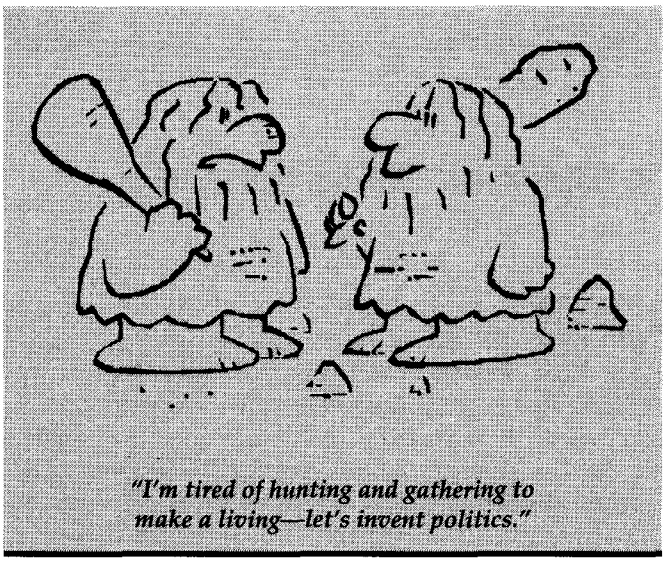
A few final observations may prove helpful. The theologian David Hollenbach has observed that Rawls tends to invoke the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wars of religion in Europe as (in Hollenbach's words) "the relevant historical memory" for discussion of the public role of religion today (*see*, "The Common Good in the Postmodern Epoch: What Role for Theology Today?" in *Religion, Ethics, & the Common Good* [Twenty-Third Publications, 1996]). Against this background, religion is seen as a threat not only to individual freedom, but also to social stability. Rawls's answer to my question about why he is now interested in religion appears to show this same slant, and he again invokes the sixteenth century. But there's another way of understanding Rawls: as not so much worried by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but concerned for liberal constitutional democracy's moral well-being. From this angle, his question is not, "How can religious believers be appeased?" but rather, "How can persons of good faith be wholehearted participants in a liberal constitutional democracy?" For such participation to be possible, it must be shown that living together in this form of regime is no mere *modus vivendi*, but has moral worth.

Helpful in clarifying what's at stake is an essay by Richard John Neuhaus, "The Liberalism of John Paul II," published in *First Things* in May 1997. In this essay, Neuhaus criticizes the growing list of "Christian critics of liberalism and modernity": the "theocons" with whom he is ordinarily enlisted. These critics, Neuhaus observes, charge that American liberalism "is premised upon the fiction of a 'social contract' that is, in turn, premised exclusively upon self-interest." According to these critics, liberal constitutional democracy is no more than an institutionalized form of Hobbes's "state of nature" and as such has no intrinsic moral worth. But Neuhaus counters that this judgment is a "distortion," and he affirms that the truth of liberalism is fully consistent with recent Catholic teaching. He makes his case drawing from John Paul II's *Centesimus annus* (1991), which recognizes the "transcendent dignity of the person," and refers also to *Redemptoris missio* (1990), where "the pope says, 'The church imposes nothing, she only proposes.'" Comments Neuhaus: "She would not impose if she could. Authentic faith is of necessity an act of freedom"—which is, he concludes, the truth at the heart of liberalism.

According to Neuhaus, the problem with liberalism arises when, "in the name of democracy, transcendent truth is excluded from the public square." Like many of Rawls's critics, Neuhaus sees what I call (in a final, leading question to Rawls) the "functioning of liberal constitutional democracy" as hopelessly too abstract an idea to protect the dignity of the individual. For Neuhaus, individual dignity requires a foundation in an underlying public consensus about religious or philosophical truths.

It is in this regard that Rawls's thinking is innovative. In "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," Rawls suggests, much like Neuhaus, that the religions and other "comprehensive doctrines" that support a liberal constitutional democracy



"I'm tired of hunting and gathering to make a living—let's invent politics."

can be seen as its "vital social basis": in other words, as part of what makes democracy viable. Rawls does not argue that truth is out of place in politics, but that the way it is argued for is crucial. (So his exclamation to me: "No, you're not being asked to renounce [truth]! Of course not. The question is, we have a particular problem....") Where Rawls differs from Neuhaus is this: Rawls does not think that reestablishing a consensus about religious or philosophical truths is a realistic project; such is the lesson he draws from the controversy over *A Theory of Justice*. To this extent, he agrees with John Courtney Murray's thinking about the erosion of that historical consensus. Rawls's attitude toward what he calls "the fact of reasonable pluralism," however, is more positive than Murray's was. For Rawls, respecting reasonable pluralism is morally valuable itself and provides liberal constitutional democracy its moral justification.

Rawls is not pretending, then, to solve our political problems. What the idea of public reason can do for us, he argues more modestly, is give us an insight into the meaning of citizenship and the resolve to endure these problems. For Rawls, trying to come to terms with one another is the virtue of democratic citizens. On his view, the moral worth of treating one another as free and equal cannot be broken down into the good of isolated, self-interested individuals, but must be considered as a whole. So considered, this way of treating one another can be seen as what the philosopher Charles Taylor has called an "irreducibly social good": a good that binds us together and makes living together in a democracy at once possible and worthwhile. In more down-to-earth terms: throw out respect, let civility go to the winds, and order also will soon be scattered. This, though, is merely a pragmatic, not a moral argument for valuing constitutional democracy. What's morally worthwhile about democracy is that it makes possible what Rawls calls "civic friendship." This is its good. Like all kinds of friendship, civic friendship can only be had in common and cannot be forced on anybody. It is what Rawls's thinking is always aspiring to foster. □

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Celia Wren

DOROTHY DAY: THE PLAY

'Fool for Christ'

"The stage is a lie," Voltaire said; "make it as truthful as possible." Often, a production's physical setting plays a role in luring us to accept a dramatic lie, the words and movements of actors, as truth, the behavior of real people in a real world. A luxurious theater's gilt and red velvet, for example, seems almost to bribe us into suspending disbelief.

But a makeshift theater can complement a play just as effectively as an ornate Broadway house. An unglamorous context worked to advantage recently when I watched the actress Sarah Melici perform *Fool for Christ* in the auditorium of the Catholic Worker. Melici performs this one-woman show about Dorothy Day at churches, retreat houses, and other locations, and, as one might expect, she performs with minimal equipment: a handbag, a book or two, a cardboard sign that reads DON'T BUY GRAPES. On this occasion, at least, her forum—a hall with peeling cream-colored plaster, and furniture covered with sheets—was equally spartan, a suitable environment for a play about a woman who chose what most people would feel to be a spartan existence.

The stacks of yellowing *Catholic Workers* on shelves around the hall seemed to help me to glimpse the woman who co-founded the Catholic Worker movement. The jail that Melici conjured so simply with a sofa and an easel, the Staten Island beach and the cardinal's office reproduced with the same—these visions detached themselves briefly from the world of the rainstorm outside and the half-empty bench I sat on, with the man asleep at the far end.

It was the memory of another makeshift theater that sent me to Melici's play: a theater where I engaged in the only whole-hearted cursing I have ever done in my life. The occasion was another play about Dorothy Day, mounted at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. I played a prostitute—an anomaly of an undergraduate acting career otherwise devoted to playing innocent young girls and innocent, cantankerous grandmothers.

During the scene in question, the police raided a flophouse where Day had taken shelter for the night and Mae—the character I played—was indignant. I remember springing up from my pallet to holler a series of colorful epithets, with the audience a blur through the blind glare of the spotlights.

"I didn't know you could swear like that," a friend said admiringly afterward. And in a sense I couldn't: the attraction of acting lay in leaving the self behind, and Mae was the one with the foul mouth. I didn't really believe I was Mae, of course, and yet in a way I did, or I would have stayed mute. Two different realities coexisted.

Speaking both to Melici and to Randy-Michael Testa, the playwright/director who orchestrated my cursing all those years ago, I was struck by their sense of this duality: the hard surface of circumstance, supporting or opposing their efforts to mount a play, and the world of Dorothy Day, with whom they began to feel a kind of communion.

Testa, who now teaches at Dartmouth, reminded me how hard we'd struggled to give his play *Dorothy Day: In Thought, Word and Deed* breathing room in the heady political atmosphere of the Kennedy School. The script consisted only of Day's own words, selected and arranged. "Dorothy was such a great writer, and such an honest journalist," Testa notes, "that her own moral self-scrutiny was to me the most interesting part of whatever dramatic action there was....I tried to include the scenes where we overheard Dorothy's *confession*—and those also happened to be the scenes that had really great ac-

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tion, if you want to call it that."

Our stage was the Public Affairs Forum, a central space hemmed in by tiers of offices and classrooms. As we rehearsed, students and professors went about their business, sometimes wandering right through a scene, oblivious to actors trying to pray, or picket, or curse in character. Ultimately, the slight hostility of the environment made our play more powerful. Testa remembers how odd it was when the actor playing Trotsky, from a pulpit draped with a huge Soviet flag, bellowed a speech over the strains of the Internationale—after all, this was an academic institution where students dreamed of becoming president, and where members of the Reagan administration, and other dignitaries, gathered to salute their own prestige. "Putting a play up about an anarchist at the Kennedy School of Government is itself an act of political maneuvering...," Testa observes. "Doing it in that setting, where power and authority and government savvy are key...it really was a wonderful, paradoxical moment."

By contrast, circumstances have more often harmonized with *Fool for Christ*. A veteran of regional theater who has appeared in the television shows *Law and Order* and *The Golden Years*, as well as the New York Shakespeare Festival, Melici had reached that point in an actress's career when roles become scarcer, and so had begun to toy with the slightly terrifying idea of doing a one-woman show. Looking at a statue of Day that stands in front of her New Jersey church, she realized that she didn't know much about the monument's subject. As she read *The Long Loneliness* and other works by Day, she became increasingly attracted to this woman who, she observes, "lived the works of mercy, the spiritual and the physical." On a personal level, too, she found that she could identify with Day: "She was a mother, she was a grandmother...she was one of us."

Paul Novosel, director and composer of *Stations*—a musical based on the stations of the cross—offered to direct *Fool for Christ*, and playwright Donald Yonker wrote the script. Melici first performed the work at the Catholic Worker, on East 3rd Street, in January 1998, and since then has taken it to groups of clergy and laypeople in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Profiting from the flexibility of a solo act, she was even able to execute the entire monologue on the patio of a woman too ill to see the show when it played nearby.

To date audiences have been enthusiastic. The *Catholic Worker* called *Fool for Christ* "the most accurate portrayal we've seen...a perfect production." Her role has brought Melici another kind of satisfaction as well, she says: "It seems as if wherever I go to do it, I meet someone who will give me some more information, something that is moving, something that is personal, that brings [Day] closer to me....It's opened up a whole new world."

Testa, who has reworked *Dorothy Day* into a one-woman show that is mounted intermittently, has also felt his dramaturgy bringing him closer to Day's reality. Staging the piece has introduced him to people who knew Day. He has even felt himself relying on his play's subject for guidance when contemplating a revival: "I always feel that when Dorothy wants us to put the play back up, she'll let us know."

Testa believes that Day's story translates particularly well to the stage. "In her early days of Greenwich Village bohemianism," he observes, "working for the *Call*, the Socialist newspaper, Dorothy hung out with actors and artists. Eugene O'Neill was a good friend of hers. He recited *The Hound of Heaven*, and Dorothy talks about that being a very central moment in her own spiritual development."

A representation of anyone's life can only be a lie, in Voltaire's terminology, not least because of the need to simplify and condense. But, in Testa's opinion, connections between art and life can turn a play's fiction into a particularly wonderful kind of truth. "Dorothy's life in some sense was theatrical," he reflects, "or dramatic, let's say—and that drama, that theatricality, are wonderful on the stage for illuminating the workings of grace." □

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LONGING & LOSS

Pierre Bonnard at MOMA

When New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) presented its first exhibition of Pierre Bonnard in 1948, just a year after the artist's death, the catalogue described him as an artist who "wished to paint only happy paintings." The description was ready to hand, what with the artist's shimmering landscapes, warm interiors, gorgeous still lifes, and sensuous nudes. Bonnard's opaline, deliquescent palette seemed to have carried Impressionism into the twentieth century and on, almost to its midpoint.

But there were critics as well. Soon after Bonnard's death, Christian Zervos, writing for *Cahiers d'Art*, echoed Picasso's hostile views in an article titled "Is Pierre Bonnard a Great Painter?" (Matisse angrily wrote over his own copy, "Yes. I certify that Pierre Bonnard is a great painter.") Even more important, the artist's precise intentions and range of achievement remained puzzling to critics and public alike.

Now a dazzling show at MOMA, first presented in a somewhat larger and different format at the Tate Gallery in London, sets out to set the record straight. Curated by Sarah Whitfield at the Tate and by John Elderfield at MOMA, this is not the "modern master" retrospective accorded to Picasso or Matisse, Mondrian or Miro. But it will surely go far toward establishing that Bonnard is indeed a great painter, if a highly unusual and particular one. As a visual experience, it is simply unforgettable. ("Bonnard" will remain at MOMA through October 13. Its catalogue [*Bonnard*, Abrams, $60, 270 pp.], with lavish reproductions of the eighty works shown in New York as well as others from London, is edited by Whitfield and contains essays by her and Elderfield.)

Born in the suburbs of Paris in 1867, Bonnard attended school there, spending holidays with his family at his paternal grandfather's house in the village of Le Grand-Lemps. He enrolled in both the Faculty of Law and the Académie Julian in Paris, where he met a group of young painters who came under the influence of Paul Gauguin. Giving themselves the name Nabis (Hebrew for prophet), they espoused a purely pictorial, decorative style. Bonnard's *Intimacy* (1891) is a perfect small example of the flat, all-over, coloristically adventurous approach he took as a young artist; he depicted his sister and brother-in-law smoking together in a highly compressed space, out of which the artist's own clay pipe and hand only gradually emerge for the viewer's eye. *The Croquet Game*, a year later, is a larger and still more impressive example. It presents the reverie of a family afternoon in which greens, browns, and gold suffuse a lawn where pattern has become more important than perspective. The *intimisme* of the 1890s eventually included over fifty pictures of the artist's family: "The artist who paints the emotions creates an enclosed world, the picture," Bonnard said late in his life. "One may imagine such an artist spending a great deal of time doing nothing but looking around himself and inside himself."

It was during the 1890s that the pivotal event of Bonnard's personal life occurred, his meeting Maria Boursin on a Paris street in 1893. They eventually married in 1925, after almost thirty years together. "Marthe" gradually appears in more and more paintings, such as the apparently erotic nudes *Indolence* (1898) and *Siesta* (1900), and eventually figures in over 380 of Bonnard's works.

When one comes upon *Man and Woman* (1900), the plot thickens. Here a man (the artist) and a woman (Marthe) are presented on either side of the vertical canvas, shortly after intercourse. He stands naked and seems to be reaching for something like a bathrobe. Likewise naked, she sits on the bed, fondling one of two kittens. Between them, and running almost the entire height of the picture, is a screen which represents a seemingly insuperable barrier—or, perhaps, as one critic has observed, the tree in the garden under which Adam and Eve sinned. This puzzling, imperfect, poignant work is an interpretive key for all that follows: The supposed hedonist who painted the savor of sensuous intimacy was in fact always somehow estranged from the object of desire.

Curiously, for a colorist of his caliber, it was only after the turn of the century that Bonnard rediscovered Impressionism. With others of his generation, he valued the movement's freshness, informality, and realism. But he wanted to surpass it as regards composition and, still more, the play of color. Two beautifully paired paintings from 1908 present Bonnard at his shimmering best. *The Bathroom Mirror*, all cool blue and gray, shows a washstand with a mirror above it that reflects a small child at a

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table holding a teacup and the torso of a lush nude drying herself after the bath. Just slightly larger, *The Bathroom* moves the viewer back from the same washstand to reveal half of the bedroom in which a tawny nude stands after her bath, beside a dazzling pink bed and before a lace-covered window of golden light. The mirror now reflects a frontal view of the woman. The treatment of space makes no effort at rigorous perspective—and yet yields it. The range of color is astonishing, the play of light even more so. Each painting, and especially the two together, perfectly represent what Bonnard meant when he said that he wished "to show what one sees when one enters a room all of a sudden," and that the work of art is "a stopping of time." Not a *moment* in time, as in classical Impressionism. Rather, a *stopping* of time.

But time can be held still only in memory. Shortly before World War I, Bonnard took painful stock of his previous work and began to move in another direction. Now his decentered, multifocused vision, as Pierre Schneider has described it, becomes more pronounced, as does the play and counterplay of center and periphery in his canvases.

In Bonnard's still lifes from the 1920s onward, the opulent treatment of ordinary subjects can be savored only through the multiple perspectives of a viewer's actively searching gaze. The famous *Provençal Jug* (1930), for all its rich color and dancing light, reveals its full mystery only as one's eye gradually moves to inspect the arm at the right edge of the canvas—and is amazed to find that now the jug with its bouquet, in peripheral vision, has taken on three-dimensional volume. Still more dazzling is *Basket of Fruit on a Table in the Garden at Le Cannet* (ca. 1944), with its golden grapes and red cherries in an earthenware jug on a tabletop that might have been painted by Monet in Giverny. Here the sheer lushness of the work's color makes its sketchily represented three-dimensionality tilt directly forward into the viewer's space—just as Matisse was discovering new ways to let color bring a picture frontally to-

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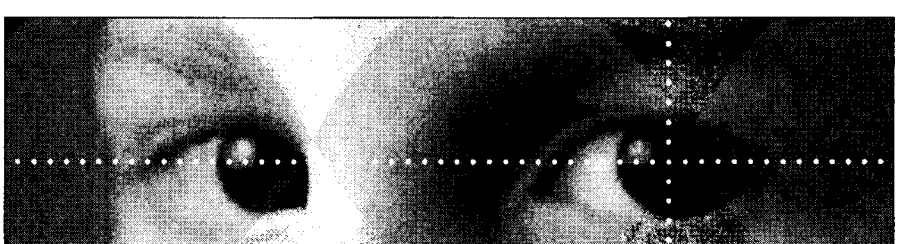

SEEKING PEACE

Everyone's seeking peace, but few find it. Why? Most people are looking in the wrong direction.

Seeking Peace by Johann Christoph Arnold
$20.00, hardcover, 264 pp, 0-87486-958-7

In his fifth book Arnold plumbs a wealth of spiritual traditions and the wisdom of ordinary people who have found peace – sometimes in surprising places. There is a peace greater than personal fulfillment, he writes; a peace greater than nations no longer at war. It is waiting for everyone. But there's a catch: it can't be had without the readiness to embrace change.

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ward the viewer at the same time.

In 1926, Bonnard bought a hillside villa at Le Cannet, a small town above Cannes. He called it Le Bosquet. There he painted panoramic views of the town, the verdant hills, and lush scenes from his garden. He reveled in the natural disorder of nature, using an almost unlimited range of markings to evoke it, much as did van Gogh. One wall in the gallery devoted to landscapes is particularly mesmerizing. In *Almond Tree in Blossom* (1946–7), the tree seems to be blooming before our eyes. *Landscape with Red Roofs* (1945–6) presents an almost paradisiacal vision as seen from the bathroom window at Le Bosquet.

There is a similar interplay of warm domestic shelter opening out into a visionary, almost primeval nature in Bonnard's interiors—for some the height of his achievement. If any part of the MOMA exhibition could have been expanded to its profit (apart from including the artist's drawings), more interiors would have been my choice. *Large Dining Room Overlooking the Garden* (1934–5) is here, as is *Dining Room Overlooking the Garden (The Breakfast Room)* of 1930–1. What seems at first a straightforward scene of a bountifully laden breakfast table before a window which opens onto a garden and finally to a public square, reveals itself as somehow blocked, unattainable: imagined more than inhabited. Here the distant garden carries forward the reversal of emotional expectation that first saw *Man and Woman* as erotic and the later *The Earthly Paradise* (1916–20) as Edenic, when each in fact equally represents threat and estrangement.

The climax of the exhibition is the large gallery of bathing nudes (Marthe) followed by a smaller gallery of the remarkable late paintings of her lying immersed in her bath. These depictions show the early influence of Degas, though without his often strained poses, and the nudes are generally shown in relaxed, easy poses in increasingly complex interiors. *The Bathroom* (1932) was painted at Le Bosquet. The room was walled in white ceramic tiles and had a linoleum floor-covering with blue and white lozenge pattern. But the 5 o'clock afternoon light (as we verify from a clock on the washstand) brings the gleaming white bathtub on the left side of the painting into harmony with white tiles there, while a rosy rectangular form on the right (perhaps a small cot) is paired with tiles that now turn blue and violet. A rainbow curtain hangs behind the iridescent body of Marthe, whose right breast reflects the white light from the bathtub. The color of this painting delights every eye that looks on it, but only gradually does one realize how complex the interplay of color and light is, how it seduces our vision continuously back and forth throughout the painting. Here is a canvas worthy of comparison with any other in the century, and indeed with any of the great nudes or bathers in the history of art.

The painter is occasionally represented in these bathing scenes, through an intruding knee or pair of hands. But he is always an implied presence in the compelling scenes of Marthe lying in her bath. *Nude in the Bath and Small Dog,* begun before Marthe's death in 1942 and worked on until just before Bonnard's own death, shows the ageless woman lying in water up to her neck, the bathtub surrealistically reflecting the contours of her body as the tiled walls and lozenge-patterned floor are transformed into a glittering mosaic. Touchingly, and with perhaps too obvious pathos, the Bonnards' pet dog, Ubu, sits loyally on a small mat just before the tub. This scene, as John Elderfield has pointed out, represents the culmination of Bonnard's career, a magisterial portrayal in elegiac tones of remembered intimacy longed for and lost.

The exhibition ends with nine of the dozen or so known self-portraits. The earliest shows Bonnard as a very young, near-sighted and somewhat frightened young man, equally alert and apprehensive. In *The Boxer* (1931), he seems to be the naked figure of futility registered in acid yellow with characteristically pink hands. Three final canvases from 1943 to 1946 can only be said to be harrowing.

The great achievement of Bonnard's art, as Elderfield has argued, is to draw the viewer into the *perception* of a *remembered* moment in time which tells a story only insofar as the viewer explores that shimmering memory. Working directly from nature was too overpowering for the artist, he confessed, and so he painted from memory. Late in life he noted: "I have all my subjects to hand. I go to see them. I take notes. Then I go home. And before painting I reflect, I dream."

How far this is from an easy extension of Impressionism, or simply a ravishingly decorative, symbolist art, must now be clear. In a characteristically modern way, Bonnard uses the most ordinary subjects to express the ambiguity and inner irresolution of contemporary experience. The contradiction of shimmering surface and stilled emotion seems by the end of the exhibition to have been at work from its beginning. Drawn back again and again to canvases of seductive beauty, we come to see them as lyrics of intimacy desired but unattained. □

Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J., *is the president of Georgetown University.*

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Words take flight

The Bird Catcher
Poems
Marie Ponsot
Alfred A. Knopf, $22, 91 pp.

Suzanne Keen

Read over time, a journal like *Commonweal* begins to feel like a friend, known well enough to be praised and abused, missed when it goes away over the summer vacation, relied upon to recommend its favorite books. Marie Ponsot's *The Bird Catcher* begs to be pressed into the hands of a friend. I know I will not be alone among *Commonweal* readers to recognize Marie Ponsot's name and poems from these pages, and I hope I will be forgiven for quoting at length, in case anyone out there has missed her. Take a gulp of this poem,

"Underbutter"

This house has three entrance-ways.
Water flushes its hidden places.

Sun-flush slides rosily off the wall. Dusk dawns.
Cats want out. Deer nose out of the woodlot.
Bats scour the near air as it cools.

Wheel-house: the house rides a cooling land-mass.
Oceans hiding desirable continents
flank it. The round earth turns as it rides.

Its flank turned to the flank of the hill, the dog
turns off the vista and sniffs at fresh grass.

Angels fly into the fresh vat of cream
& suddenly it's butter.

Sudden awe sudden dread: the visible
fontanelle just under the scalp
of the delicate new-born head.

The delicate tip of the window geranium broke off.
The root-threads pop out a strong bud, lower down.

Let me begin by commenting on the end. Marie Ponsot writes wonderful ends of poems. This final pair of lines tells a story of loss and recovery, set in the vital miniature world of the window box. It suggests not only the burgeoning that can be induced by pruning, but the adjusted point of view that enables us to see the "strong bud, lower down." The poem has already carried its reader through a dizzying variety of perspectives—in the house, hearing the water somewhere—looking out at various times of day—suddenly spinning and dwarfed by the scale of landmass, oceans, and planet—shuffled down from earth flank, hill flank, dog flank, to the dog's nose—whisked from the ether with the angels into the interior of the churn. What could the "underbutter" be? (I don't know, but I want some!) —perhaps some of it lies through the fontanelle "just under the scalp/of the delicate new-born head." Though the poem's speaker tacitly urges adjustments in consciousness, it scarcely reveals the mind of the human person inside the container of the house. "Underbutter" is mysterious: "Sudden awe sudden dread" pulses a rare inward interruption in the searching outward gaze, in the terse descriptions.

Close to the kennings of Anglo-Saxon verse, Ponsot's evocative word pairs comprise a bright thread running through the poem's fabric: "entrance-ways," "sun-flush," "woodlot," "wheel-house," "land-mass," "new-born," and "root-threads" evoke an archetypal pattern of arrival, dissolution, cycling back. This tale, embedded in the nouns, does not contradict the top layer of implicit story: a person (woman?) in a house considers its structure, notes both times of day and woodland neighbors, carries out ordinary tasks without dulling to their mysteries, considers two kinds of delicacy, human and vegetable. Along the way the earth gets older, cream turns to butter, and the sight or memory of an infant's skull swerves into the sublime emotions of awe and dread. The causes of these disorientingly different actions remain obscure, except for the angels who make the butter come. This gives the poem the feel of riddling, as in the first stanza: "This house has three entrance-ways./Water flushes its hidden places." Answer: the body? Question: Is then the underbutter the soul or the life force inside?

Marie Ponsot's poems both invite and disarm this kind of readerly questioning. Some poems are so direct that a collection of their last lines can reasonably evoke the power of their themes. From "One is One," a command addressed to a wayward heart: "Join the rest of us, /and joy may come, and make its test of us." From "Pourriture Noble," a moral: "Age is not/all dry rot. It's never too late./Sweet is your real estate." From "The Border": "Getting married is like that./Getting married is not like that." And from "Festival of Bread": "The widow shoves her night-time self aside,/

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kneads silence down into dough, and lets it rise." This sampler of conclusions suggests how accessible, how aphoristic, and even quotable Ponsot's poems can be. Yet there is never anything pat about the thinking or phrasing even in the most rigorously formal of the verses.

Ponsot risks losing some readers when she returns again and again to elaborate Provençal verse forms, sestinas and villanelles, and she ups the ante when she adds (arcanely) two "tritinas," one of which I quote below. A tritina goes the troubadours one better, evidently requiring the recycling, in decasyllabic lines, of three end words in one-two-three, three-one-two, two-three-one order, with a concluding line that employs each end word in one-two-three order. (There may be other rules I have not discerned.)

"Living room"

The window's old & paint-stuck in its frame.
If we force it open the glass may break.
Broken windows cut, and let in the cold

to sharpen house-warm air with outside cold
that aches to buckle every saving frame
& let the wind drive ice in through the break
till chair cupboard walls stormhit all goods break.
The family picture, wrecked, soaked in cold,
would slip wet & dangling out of its frame.

Framed, it's a wind-break. It averts the worst cold.

What makes a poem in so tight and elaborate a form transcend the sense of exercise? The resolute plainness of the language helps to justify the densely packed repetitions. Perhaps also the intimation that a lapse in the performance, like the imagined crack in the pane, would "buckle every saving frame," adds to the urgency of the wordsmith's work. With anti-Romantic sentiment, this poem casually props no wind harp (Aeolian lyre) to await inspiration and let in the destructive wet. Far better, the poem suggests, to stick with a tight container, a form that acts as a windbreak and preserves home and family, averting "the worst cold." Like Elizabeth Bishop, another poet who conjured up the elemental from the homeliest of subjects, Marie Ponsot uses demanding forms without making the reader feel the strain of artfulness. □

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BETTER SOLUTIONS NEEDED

False Hopes
Daniel Callahan
Simon & Schuster $24, 330 pp.

Universal Health Care
Pat and Hugh Armstrong
The New Press $24, 143 pp.

Christopher F. Koller

In just the time since this review was commissioned, Viagra has assaulted the nation, and the media have heralded a new generation of cancer drugs—smart bombs which only target cancer cells, based on genetic research. Politicians have seized upon managed care as a political horse to whip in the coming elections, and the pharmaceutical industry continues to prepare a boutique of designer drugs to accommodate the inexorable aging of a self-obsessed generation of baby-boomers. Meanwhile, almost 15 percent—over 40 million people—of the U.S. population have no insurance of any kind, and convenience stores brim with home-made posters announcing fundraisers for various victims of various maladies.

Having looked serious health-care reform in the eye four years ago and blinked, the United States is now receiving exactly what it asked for: health-system changes driven by the private sector. These changes—in all their ragged, inequitable, and profit-driven trappings—have left many citizens uneasy. Depending on one's definition, over 80 percent of the population (or double the number five years earlier) now receive their care through some form of "managed-care system"—where choice of doctors and access to services are limited in exchange for reduced rates and a supposedly predictable budget. The possibility—and in some cases the reality—of managed-care companies inserting themselves clumsily into treatment decisions between patients and providers has created ground for outrage. Anecdotes of needed care denied or delayed as a result of managed-care companies have driven public perception and public policy. Often lost in the debate are the facts that managed care has reduced health-care cost increases and can improve health indicators, that wide and unexplained variations in clinical practice do exist, and that no alternatives to private financing and delivery of health care are being considered in the United States.

False Hopes is Daniel Callahan's canary-in-a-coal mine message about the plight of Western health-care systems. In a series of books over the last ten years, Callahan has poked at the foundation of Western medicine like a moral engineer, documenting its fragility as he examined attitudes toward death, our inability to set funding priorities, and our addiction to the notion of endless medical progress. *False Hopes* builds on his past work and extends his reach across all national systems of health-care delivery and financing to consider what attitudinal changes are necessary for modern medicine to survive.

Callahan begins with a fundamental observation: all systems of health-care delivery and financing are under duress. Demands exceed resources in every case,

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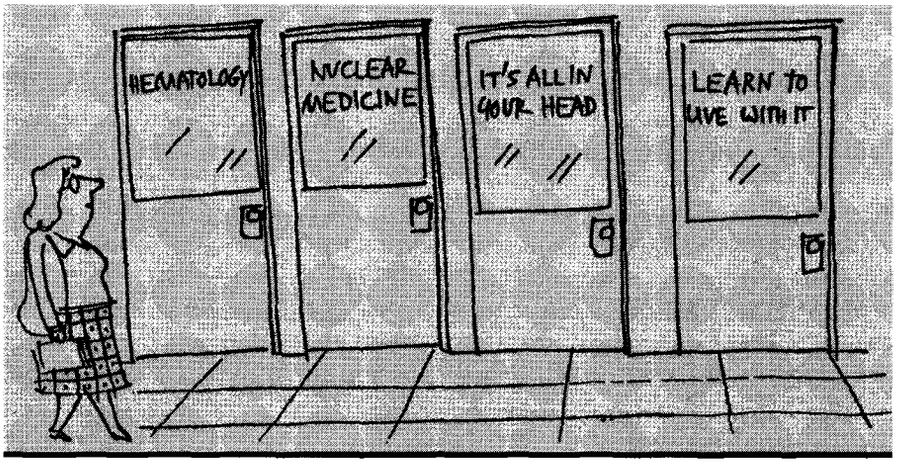
not just in the United States. His thesis: modern medicine has aspirations and practices which guarantee stress and collapse. The themes of medicine's current era—domination of nature, unlimited capacity for improvement and social expansionism—ensure its demise. If the Viagras and new Alzheimer drugs don't bankrupt it, invasive surgeries on eighty-five-year-olds will.

Callahan's proposal is suitably grand—a new concept of a "sustainable medicine" for a new era. A sustainable medicine, he maintains, is "a medicine that, in both research and health-care delivery, aims for a steady-state plateau, at a level that is economically affordable and equitably available, and also at a level that is no less psychologically sustainable, satisfying most—but, of necessity, not all—reasonable health needs and expectations."

Callahan draws the concept of a sustainable medicine from the environmental movement. As an awareness of the earth's ecosystems has reshaped our view of economic growth toward the idea of sustainable development, so might a reacknowledgment of human limits change our expectations of medicine. "I am after a change in the hopes and ideals of medicine," he proclaims, "not simply in the way we organize and deploy the provision of care to sick people."

The bulk of *False Hopes* is a series of independent but connected essays in which the concept of a "sustainable medicine" is applied to themes important to medical philosophy. While this is familiar ground for Callahan readers, he attempts to use the sustainable medicine concept to integrate and further his previous work. For example, when he looks at how a notion of sustainability would influence the concept of progress, which occasionally supplants the patient's own well-being as a goal of contemporary medicine, he comes to a not surprising conclusion: "sustainable medicine requires the acceptance of an idea of progress that sets finite goals, that is willing to accept adequacy rather than perfection." In the end, this type of medicine must be one which is comfortable in saying—in its research and its patient care—"enough already."



Callahan spends much time assessing humanity's attitudes toward nature. Mainstream environmental thinking has slowly moved from a conservationist view, seeing nature as something to be managed and exploited for our use and enjoyment, to more of a preservationist stance, which views humanity as part of an ecosystem, rather than sitting at the controls. Medicine, he maintains, has much to learn from this more modest, less instrumental view of how humanity interacts with nature. This bias toward the conservationist stance is reflected, he maintains, in the historical hegemony in Western medicine of *aesculapius*—the belief that only medical intervention can cure a body's ills—over *hygeia*—the notion that a well-tended body can cure itself.

Hygeia does not deny the pain nature inflicts upon us, nor our need to conquer or mitigate that suffering. Still, there is a balance to be achieved. Sustainable medicine, Callahan writes, must live within boundaries of nature, recognize human need to struggle against aspects of nature that cause suffering and premature death, and manage that struggle in some affordable way. This structure is characteristic of much of Callahan's writing in the book—to work from principles and fundamental experiences, to think analogically and syncretically, and to hew a middle path when the going gets tough, explicitly acknowledging the limits of individual and community resources.

The fundamental scandal of the U.S. health system is its inability to guarantee universal access. Callahan is at his strongest toward the end of *False Hopes* when he considers these equity issues. Here he maintains that, given the technological, market, and ethos-of-progress imperatives dominant in contemporary medicine, an equitable health system is only possible if informed by a notion of a sustainable medicine. This chapter, where he applies the concept of equity to themes previously discussed, is an elegant overview of his work and should be required reading for any would-be reformer.

While *False Hopes* is an important extension of Callahan's previous work, it has some conceptual weaknesses. The environmental analogy at the basis of the notion of sustainable medicine is informative but fundamentally limited by the very personal nature of health care. Limits and interconnectedness are much easier to accept when recycling than when rationing treatment decisions for myself and my family.

Callahan is also gentle in his treatment of the market economy, which exacerbates or even causes many of the woes he cites. Absent regulatory restraints, the profit motive continues to fuel a ravenous pharmaceutical industry, which takes wants, turns them into needs, and then enshrines them as health-care rights. Similarly, many technological advances in diagnosis and treatment are driven not by patient care but by investor-owned companies. More generally, in a market-driven culture individual want trumps collective need, and all bow to the altar of autonomy and choice, growth and expansion. Pub-

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lic health priorities lose out to individual medical treatment and research.

One also wonders if Callahan paints with too broad a brush and fails to acknowledge differing cultural attitudes that might make a sustainable medicine more likely. Certainly there are elements of non-Western and alternative medicine traditions which are sympathetic to a more limited medicine. Although he spends considerable time differentiating between rights-based health systems such as that of the United States and solidarity-based health systems such as those found in Europe, Callahan concludes that all are in equal trouble. In fact, the traditions of communal solidarity which made global health budgets and universal access realizable in those countries would appear to make them more amenable to the concepts of limits and sustainability that Callahan promotes.

The self-professedly broad arc of Callahan's aspirations make for a good balance against the puffery that passes for reform these days in Washington. It does, however, also leave one wondering what interim steps can be taken toward his promised land. For Hugh and Pat Armstrong, both of Carleton University in Ottawa, who co-authored *Universal Health Care*, the answer is crystal clear: Head North! This brief collection of essays summarizes the implementation of universal health insurance in Canada and then catalogues the Canadian system's virtues.

As a tract, *Universal Health Care* has the cheerleader tones and one-sided nature one would expect. However, its underlying story—that broad-reaching activist public policy for the public good can be achieved—bears repeating. Universal hospital insurance was established in Canada in 1957 and physician insurance came nine years later. Since then the national government and the provinces have continued to tweak the program, but its five underlying principles of portability, comprehensiveness, access, universality, and public administration have remained untouched. Delivery systems consist largely of private providers, and financing and administration is a combination of federal and provincial responsibility. The Armstrongs do their best responsibly to debunk the traditional criticisms of the system—long queues, government bureaucracy, heavy taxes, and dissatisfied providers. They also admit a few faults: cost inflation, and lack of drug coverage primarily. In the end, Canadians can boast of lower per capita costs than the United States, higher satisfaction ratings, equal or superior public-health outcomes, and, of course, universal coverage.

Will we all be done in by a plethora of Viagras and gene therapies, the burdens of an aging society, and our own furious needs? Absent the sort of attitude change for which *False Hopes* calls—one that will allow us to change our expectations and name our priorities—it is a distinct possibility. □

Christopher F. Koller *is the chief executive officer of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, an HMO focusing on publicly insured populations, in Providence.*

LEANING ON RELIGION

The Idea of Human Rights
Four Inquiries
Michael J. Perry
Oxford University Press, $29.95, 162 pp.

David McCabe

All occupations have their hazards. That to which political philosophers are especially susceptible we might call Laputa syndrome, after Swift's description in *Gulliver's Travels* of a floating island whose residents are so absorbed by abstract speculations that they barely acknowledge the world around them. This malady threatens all political theorists who, in striving to articulate principles rationally persuasive to all, proceed from an idea of the person that intentionally abstracts from any particularities that might block agreement to those principles. Laputa syndrome has struck when the individuals who populate the world of political philosophy have become so denuded that they forfeit any genuine connection to the real people whose conflicts the theorists aim to resolve.

Michael Perry, who holds a distinguished chair in law at Wake Forest, has long waged a persuasive campaign against Laputa syndrome. He is particularly concerned with political philosophers who undervalue the claims of religion, a failing all the more vexing given that these theorists often rely on moral presuppositions which are, for many men and women, inseparable from their religious beliefs. In *The Idea of Human Rights*, Perry's aim is even more ambitious: Instead of arguing simply that religious beliefs merit serious attention from theorists, his claim here is that the very idea of human rights—the idea, as he puts it, "that certain things ought not to be done to any human being and certain other things ought to be done for every human being"—simply makes no sense outside a religious framework.

Perry argues, in the first chapter, that the idea of human rights amounts to a claim that all human beings are sacred and that no nonreligious account can adequately account for the sacred. In forestalling the objection that he has simply begged the question, Perry says quickly that one could just as well replace the idea of being sacred with being inviolable, or having inherent worth. I think, though, the issue is more complex than he allows. For Perry will later assert that the idea of human rights does not impose any absolute constraints on what one may do to others, and that such rights may always in theory be outweighed by other concerns. On its face, this seems hard to square with the notion of inviolability. Nor does "having

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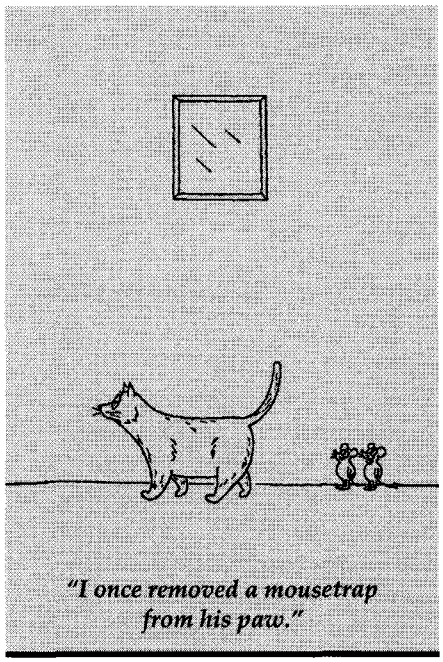
inherent worth" seem adequate as a gloss on the sacred, for—to use one of Perry's examples—one could argue that the pleasure of scratching an itch has inherent worth, but that hardly makes it sacred.

I suspect that Perry connects the idea of human rights to the sacred because he believes that only a religious framework can give our lives meaning. And only if our lives have meaning can one finally justify the existence of moral obligations toward others. Though powerful, this argument is open to important objections. Many philosophers, for example, regard the very question of life's meaning as rather obscure. Wittgenstein once asked how immortality solves the mystery of our lives: would not eternal life, he noted, be as much a riddle as our present life? At the foundational level that Perry stresses, a similar question can be asked: How, exactly, does the fact that God created us give our lives a meaning they otherwise lack? Perhaps some think this question confused, the answer self-evident. But nonreligious defenders of human rights can make the same reply when Perry asks on what grounds they claim that rape, torture, and murder are things that ought not be done to other people. Need they say more than that such acts deeply and without justification harm human wellbeing, and that it's self-evident one ought not do them?

In fact, however, Perry offers another, more suggestive argument for the dependence of human rights on religion. Only a religious view, he says, explains how all men and women are, because created by God, members of one family. And just as a good life for anyone involves appropriate degrees of concern for one's family, the truth of creation reveals that a good life involves similar concern for all human beings. Notice how this approach elegantly resolves the moral philosopher's thorny problem of motivation: Everyone has a reason to treat others well because such concern is part of any good life. This is an immensely interesting argument, especially timely now as moral theorists are turning more attention to the importance of personal relationships as a



"I once removed a mousetrap from his paw."

locus of moral responsibilities, but its ambit may be limited. Perry is surely right that without caring relationships with family and friends, an individual leads an impoverished life, but that's because such goods as companionship, love, and deep trust can be achieved only in such relationships. If I already have such relationships, however, it's not clear what I lose by failing to include all people in the world within the circle of my concern. Further, such inclusion may potentially attenuate the close relationships I do have: though our emotional resources are probably larger than we know, they may not be limitless.

After arguing for the essentially religious grounding of the idea of human rights, Perry defends the idea against three objections: that it ignores other important ideals (including responsibilities and communal goods), that it is incoherent because there are no interests common to all human beings, and that the absolute nature of rights is unreasonable. The first two objections are easily, if not all that interestingly, disposed of: rights talk need not be insensitive to the importance of other ideals, nor is the denial that there are significant interests shared by all human beings at all plausible.

The question of whether rights must be understood in absolute terms proves more recalcitrant, and more fruitful. On some interpretations, the idea of human rights creates absolute prohibitions on what may be done to human beings—for example, it makes it always wrong to torture an innocent person, even if necessary to save millions more. In countering this absolutist view, then, Perry must show that such acts might be not only morally permissible, but also consistent with the idea of human rights.

Given the traditional schism between a rights-based morality and a consequentialist one, Perry's goal is enormously ambitious, and his discussion here is rich and stimulating. Ultimately, again, I'm not convinced Perry is right. The absolutist interpretation of rights claims may serve most importantly as a means by which human beings assert their independence from the vagaries of a fickle world, as an expression of our moral sovereignty in the face of unpredictable circumstances. And it may be, though I'm unsure, that we can assert this independence only by committing ourselves to certain absolute principles. About the only principle to which Perry appears willing to declare absolute allegiance is, "Always treat another human being lovingly," and even there it's hard to see how one could honor that in torturing another.

But while Perry has not convinced me of the two major claims that bookend this volume, I am not sure he is wrong. These are among the deepest questions in moral philosophy, and Perry forces us to confront the fact that certain views about rights that many of us take for granted (that they can be understood in a secular sense, or that they establish absolute protections) are open to serious objections. Those readers who want a short book (excluding notes, the text runs about one hundred pages) that introduces them to several critical issues surrounding the idea of human rights will find this book extremely rewarding. Anyone who has considered the idea more thoroughly will also benefit from Perry's powerful arguments. That's a fine achievement for such a slim book. □

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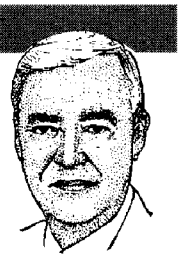
RELIGION BOOKNOTES



Lawrence S. Cunningham

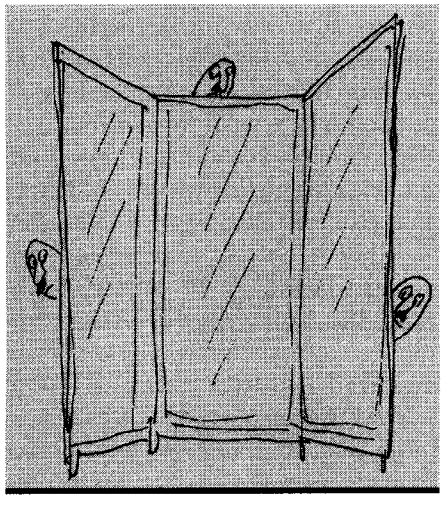
Maybe he looked indeed/much as Rembrandt envisioned him" wrote the late lamented Denise Levertov, but, in fact, we will never know. However, there is no end to those who wish to provide us a portrait of Jesus of Nazareth. What is true of the visual arts is equally true of the belletristic tradition. This wonderful anthology of poetry inspired by Jesus and his life demonstrates both the polysemic nature of Jesus as he is understood in the tradition and the ways in which his life has been read throughout the centuries by people of various cultures.

Divine Inspiration: The Life of Jesus in World Poetry
edited by Robert Arwan, George Dardess, and Peggy Rosenthal
Oxford University Press, $35, 595 pp.

The editors organized this book according to the chronology of the Gospels, anchoring each incident, as they say, with poems that most literally follow the text of the Bible. Most of the usual suspects—Dante, Milton, Péguy, Hopkins, etc.—are here. But what makes this collection so intriguing is how it introduces us to unfamiliar poets from unexpected places. Such poets range from the Swiss priest, Thomas Immoos, who has spent his entire adult life in Japan ("Lord, have mercy on us!/Have mercy on your children in the firestorm of Nagasaki...") to the young Nigerian poet Funso Avejina whose poetic sequence "And so it came to pass..." is a prophetic critique of political and social corruption. This wide spectrum includes Korean, Japanese, Latin American, and even Muslim poets from the Middle East. Who could not be struck by the tercet of the Bengali poet Nirenda Chakrabart? It was written as he rides a bus through his native city: "I look at the sky and I look at you/child of a beggar-mother, Christ of Calcutta." It is poems like that, written from an angle that is not Western and with a vocabulary that is unexpected, that please so much.

This anthology also has a nice balance between the contemporary and the past. The editors go back to early patristic authors like Ignatius of Antioch and Clement of Alexandria, provide a fair selection from the Syriac patristic tradition whose theology is almost always done in poetry and hymns, through the medievals like Dante and Jacopone da Todi to the early modern and into the modern period. Not all of the poets wrote in a devotional mode. I was much struck, for example, by a simple poem, brilliant in its artistic conceit, by the surrealist poet and social critic Jacques Prévert. He writes of the Last Supper: "They are at table/they eat not/Nor touch their plates/and their plates stand straight up/Behind their heads." Jesus, of course, is also a person social activists could use to strike out at middle-class religion; thus Sarah Cleghorn's final quatrain of a poem on the trial of Jesus: "Ah, let no local him refuse/Comrade Jesus has paid his dues./Whatever other be debarred/Comrade Jesus has his red card."

This is a book to browse or, for the preacher, to mine. It also provides the opportunity to spend some time grumbling about the omission of one's favorite poems. At any rate, it is a wonderful read, full of new poems (at least, new to me) as well as welcoming the old poems which, once, everyone with any Catholic culture would have known at least in passing. For those poets who are unknown to us, the full bibliographies in the credits provide further resources to discover. I loved this book.



Mark Tully's text derives from a four-part series he did for BBC television on the search for the authentic meaning of Jesus. The book reflects the excellent BBC format for documentaries of this sort: lots of scenic travel; an urbane host; interviews with various experts; and a timely topic. Tully is obviously well-educated, passionate about his topics, and a probing inquirer. He takes us to India (where he was born and raised) to speak with Christians there, and this allows him to draw some intelligent parallels between Christianity and Hinduism through conversation with Ursula King, an Indologist who is a Christian. He spends time in the Holy Land in the company of the Dominican Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, a formidable scholar, as well as Rabbi David Rosen and Duke University's E.P. Sanders. We hear Richard Horsley on Jesus as rebel and of the reductionist theories of John Dominic Crossan. Jesus the Sage is constructed through both a meditation on early monasticism in Egypt (and the inevitable nexus with gnosticism) and a theory, made popular by a British scholar, that Jesus was like an ancient Cynic wandering teacher.

Four Faces: A Journey in Search of Jesus the Divine, the Jew, the Rebel, the Sage
by Mark Tully
Ulysses Press, $15, 237 pp.

The good news about this book is that it is immensely readable, and even moving in places. The less good news is that the highly suppositious theories of the various scholars do not add up to a coherent whole. I could not read the versions of Jesus proposed by the various scholars (some connected to the ballyhoo of the "Jesus Seminar") without agreeing with Luke Timothy Johnson's critique that the "Questers" are the left

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wing of the fundamentalist tradition: Jesus must be a Galilean peasant revolutionary; a Wisdom teacher; an eschatological prophet; a charismatic rabbi; etc.; whereas, in fact, the New Testament portrait(s) of Jesus are too complex and too elusive to narrow down to a single all-embracing snapshot.

In fairness to Tully, he is not reductionist. In fact, he ends by saying that all the portraits he set forth still cannot explain the church and that what matters in the end is the overarching myth of the Resurrection, by which it is even possible today to say "Christ is risen!" In the final analysis, Tully's book is only a "good read," but for that we should be minimally grateful. The introduction is written by that master of "lite" spirituality, Thomas Moore.

Evdokimov (1901–70) belonged to that extraordinary circle of Russian Orthodox writers who found themselves in Paris after the Russian Revolution. Evdokimov himself studied at their Saint Sergius Institute (under Nicholas Berdiaev and Sergius Bulkovsky) and later was connected to that institute as well as a lecturer at the Institut Catholique in Paris and the ecumenical study center in Switzerland. I know him mainly through the immense admiration Thomas Merton had for his writings and my own reading of his wonderful book on icons. This new full version of his book *Ages of the Spiritual Life* is most welcome—it provides another resource for English speakers to read the work of a person deeply imbued with the Russian theological tradition.

Ages of the Spiritual Life
by Paul Evdokimov
Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, $14.95, 263 pp.

This book is not a systematic treatise, so it can be read in an unsystematic fashion. Evdokimov was acutely aware of the fashionable "existential" intellectual world in which he lived in Paris. He was willing to engage that world and he also had a good sense of Roman Catholicism and of continental Protestantism. His theological world view was sensitive to the larger secular world while remaining rooted in the Orthodox world of spirituality, liturgy, and patristics. Those not well acquainted with the Orthodox world will find this a user-friendly volume. Evdokimov combines a complete command of the traditional sources with an irenic way of writing. These pages are studded with lines from the great patristic writers as well as from the liturgy, thereby giving the text an added thickness and depth.

One of this book's most interesting arguments is Evdokimov's conception of "interiorized monasticism." Apart from those who actually enter the monastic life, Evdokimov argues, there is a path in which the traditional monastic values can be (ought to be!) interiorized by all believing Christians as they mature in the practice of their faith. In the final analysis, the assimilation of these virtues, whether it be asceticism correctly understood or the experience of contemplative prayer, all lead to one end: "we are invited to live our faith, to see what is not seen, to contemplate the wisdom of God in the apparent absurdity of history, and to become light, revelation, and prophecy." Evdokimov himself concentrates on the traditional monastic vows, but his concept of "interiorized monasticism" is similar to the recent writings of, say, Kathleen Norris. This book is, in the fullest sense of the term, "spiritual reading." It would make an excellent retreat companion.

Rosemary Haughton is one of my favorite writers on theology so it pleased me a few columns ago to note with favor a biography written about her. I regard Haughton's book *The Catholic Thing* as one of the wiser books written on the Catholic reality. She has been an author and an activist, and currently lives and directs a community in Massachusetts called Wellspring House which offers hospitality to abused and homeless women and their families. This book combines her considerable skills as a theologian with her experiences as a social activist and her passion for Christian hospitality.

Images for Change: The Transformation of Society
by Rosemary Luling Haughton
Paulist, $19.95, 197 pp.

The thesis is simply stated: we can reimagine our lives, individual and social, by using the image of the house or home and reflecting on how the "houses of our lives are built and therefore how they can and can't be altered without disaster." In developing this image she relies heavily on the visionary theory of the European architect, Lucien Kroll. Kroll demonstrated an ability to change old structures into new ones while paying tribute both to the former space and contemporary needs. Haughton's extended meditation on how a house gets rebuilt is, of course, a story of transformation and/or conversion for the individual and for society.

If the house serves as Haughton's central image, the virtue which she proposes as fundamental for rebuilding is that of hospitality. She contrasts the criterion of hospitality to the practice of charity (by which, in this instance, she means the voluntary giving of monies to alleviate problems). Charity, she says, denotes no need for social change, while hospitality forces us to think differently about both our personal house and our social one.

This evocative book has all of the trademarks of Haughton's style: she is a storyteller, a reader of cultural theory, a lover of literature, a perceptive student of the sacramental life, and dedicated to the poor and needy. I read the final pages on an airplane and happened to glance through the in-flight magazine which featured an interview with Millard Fuller, the head of Habitat for Humanity. Fuller said that the only thing Habitat gives away is "the opportunity for a family to have a decent place to live." What Rosemary Haughton does in this wonderfully satisfying work is to tell us, in a deep and fundamental way, what the words "decent" and "place" and "to live" really mean.

Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature
by Sallie McFague
Fortress, $16, 207 pp.

Sallie McFague states the thesis of her book as follows: "Christian practice, lov-

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ing God and neighbor *as subjects*, as worthy of our love in and for themselves, should be extended to nature." McFague argues for an attitude toward the natural world that is more sacramental, more dialogical (she is much in debt to Martin Buber), more oriented toward a community of care, and more attuned to a "loving eye" than to an exploitative one.

The major arguments advanced are hardly new. McFague borrows heavily from nature writers like Annie Dillard and Bill McKibben, cites "ecofeminist" theorists and scientific writers like E. O. Wilson. My major criticism of this work is that—save for a few final homiletical pages hither and yon—McFague is strangely silent about her passion for the world of nature from a theological point of view. She pays the obligatory nod to the creation account in Genesis and doffs her hat to Saint Francis of Assisi (seemingly depending almost exclusively on Leonardo Boff's somewhat idiosyncratic view of the saint), but I did not find any sustained theological reflection on the implications of her basic thesis. McFague is open to the charge David Cunningham (no relation) made recently in his incisive study of trinitarian theology, *These Three Are One*: "...much of this recent 'eco-theology' is composed of roughly 95 percent ecology with theological considerations entering the picture only in order to buttress a position that was already ecologically warranted."

The value of McFague's book, at least for this reader, is that it serves as a catalyst for arguing against her thesis. The basic rebuttal would take the form of this question: Are we to love God, neighbor, and nature equally and, if not, what are the discriminations that are necessary to make sense of McFague's affirmation? One can love the world which comes from the hand of God without necessarily saying that one loves nature (whatever nature might mean; Saint Francis, for one, never uses the word) on a par with love of God and neighbor.

We urgently need an account of Christian theology that embraces a sense of stewardship for the natural world and sees that same world as a sacrament of God's presence. To accomplish that synthesis is not easy. Michael Northcott's *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (reviewed in this column, January 16) sorts out and offers a critique of the various "models" for such an integration. Indeed, Northcott can give the reader a good sense of the state of the question, as well as some possible trajectories for developing a theological perspective on ecological matters. McFague's solution, in my estimation, is somewhat sentimental and theologically thin. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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AIDAN'S GIFT

Sam Crane

Aidan does not talk. He cannot stand, walk, or see. He will never do these things because his brain is atypical; in the womb it grew in a unique way—polymicrogyria (more and smaller cerebral folds), agenesis of the corpus callosum (absence of major tissue connecting the hemispheres)—and does not function like yours or mine. His mental capacities are severely limited. Perhaps his most complex accomplishment came when he was about two. He would call out in a lilting "ah," wait for our answer, also an "ah," and then respond in kind. We would go back and forth this way several times, he in his crib just across the hall from our room, all of us thrilled at mutual recognition. But he cannot do this now because a terrible seizure later stole even that ability from him.

Aidan hears quite well. When he is in a room full of six-year-old peers, his unseeing eyes sparkle and widen as he attends to the wonderful noise of chattering children. He takes in their sounds, pushes his feet against the jamb of his wheelchair, and smiles. Sometimes, though not as often as before the big seizure, he perks up at the sound of his mother, or his little sister, or me, his father, but especially his mother. She knows his strength, and bathes him in her voice, which he returns, on occasion, with a single contented coo.

For the most part, Aidan is serene. Reposed in his beanbag chair, a wordless Daoist presence, he does not remark or assess or condemn, but silently and sightlessly witnesses. There have been bad times: terrible weeks when kidney stones set him screaming, or desperate days of wheezing pneumonia. But he is usually peaceful and healthy, radiating a certain calm.

He is a physically beautiful child. His wavy brown hair frames a gentle, symmetrical face: almond-oval eyes with thick lashes evenly set over a lowbridged nose; round cheeks sloping down to neatly curlicued lips, neither too thin nor too thick; fair, smooth skin. Those eyes, though blind, are open and warm. He is free of the bodily contortions suffered by some people with severe physical disabilities. No spasticity to twist his limbs akimbo. No outward physical sign that there is any significant difference here. He is, quite literally, attractive. As a baby, people were drawn to him, invariably remarking on his good looks and grace. A handsome boy now, he invites attachment, friendship.

School is where he has made most of his friends. They greet him in the morning, sometimes bringing over their favorite stuffed animal for him to feel; they sit with him at story time or help him swirl his hands in finger paint. They make for him a world of sensations and relationships. He is now the eldest, a six-year-old in a class of fours and fives, but his silence and immobility mean that his age never manifests itself in more advanced vocabulary or physicality. The other children around him are never self-conscious of their youth; quite to the contrary, their abilities are magnified in the mirror of his limitations, and many of them comfortably congregate around him.

It is at school, too, that Aidan has the greatest effect on people around him. In his first year of preschool, one of his classmates had a noticeable speech impediment. Donnie's words were often unintelligible, drawing quizzical looks and sometimes giggles from his peers. As a result, he shied away from speaking, a reaction that could worsen his problem. The teachers and therapists did a good job engaging him and supporting his efforts, but he was very much aware of his idiosyncrasy and uncomfortable with it. In Aidan, however, he had an uncommon friend, one who did not strain to understand his words or laugh when they came out garbled. Aidan did not judge or correct. He just sat silently, varying little in his countenance whatever Donnie might say. On more than one occasion when I was in the classroom, I noticed Donnie close to Aidan, happily chatting away, gaining the practice he needed to clarify his speech. Aidan was able to help.

But as Aidan grows, school will pose a difficult question: What will the public get in return for its investment in his education? For the vast majority of disabled children, school provides the knowledge and skills necessary to be "productive members of society." That is the phrase most often used to justify special education and other remedial efforts. And it is a good thing. Not too long ago educatable children were warehoused in horrendous institutions, their potential stifled. Now many disabled young adults are living independently, earning some or all of their living and moving through society. It is a great victory. Aidan, though, will never live such a life. He will never have a job and pay taxes, never produce any wealth that might contribute to the costs of his health care, education, and other social services.

Yet the answer to the school question is easier than it might appear to an economist, insurance agent, or policy wonk. The payoff for Aidan's education is not measurable on a material scale. It is found precisely in his apparent lack of utility: He reminds us that humanity is beyond utilitarian calculus, that dignity cannot be captured in a cost/benefit analysis. And if anyone is looking to quantify the impact of Aidan's presence, just ask his friend Donnie. He'll tell you in clear, plain English. □

Sam Crane *is an associate professor of political science at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts.*

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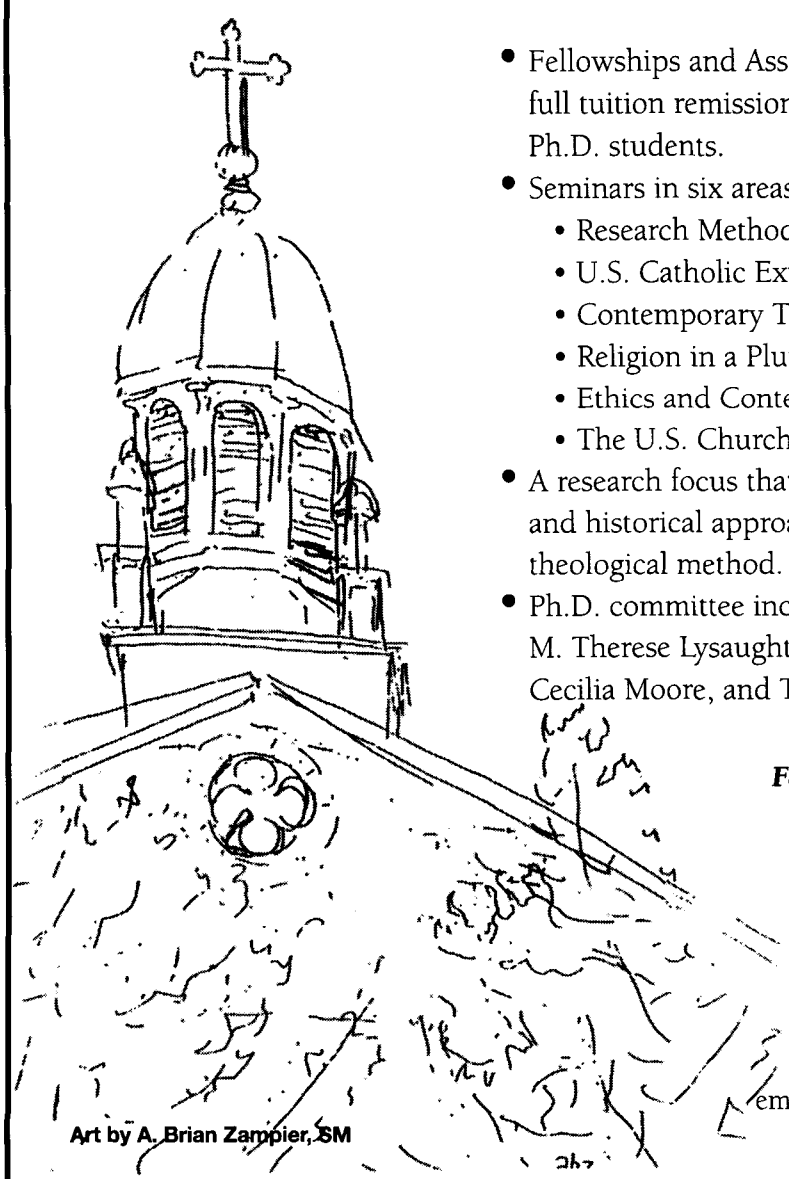

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